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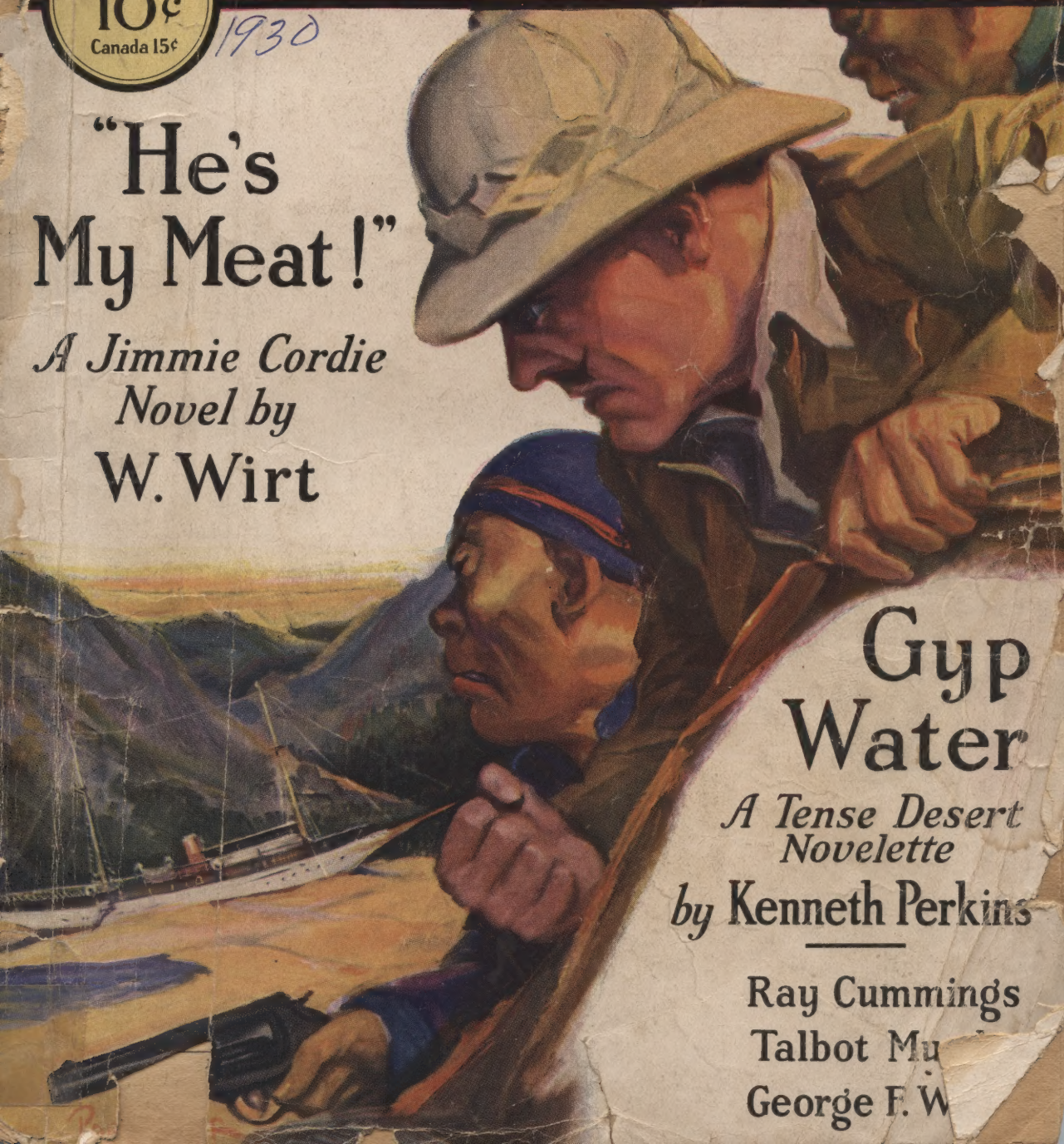
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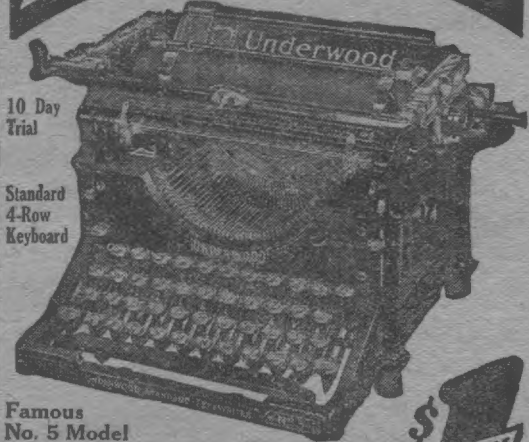
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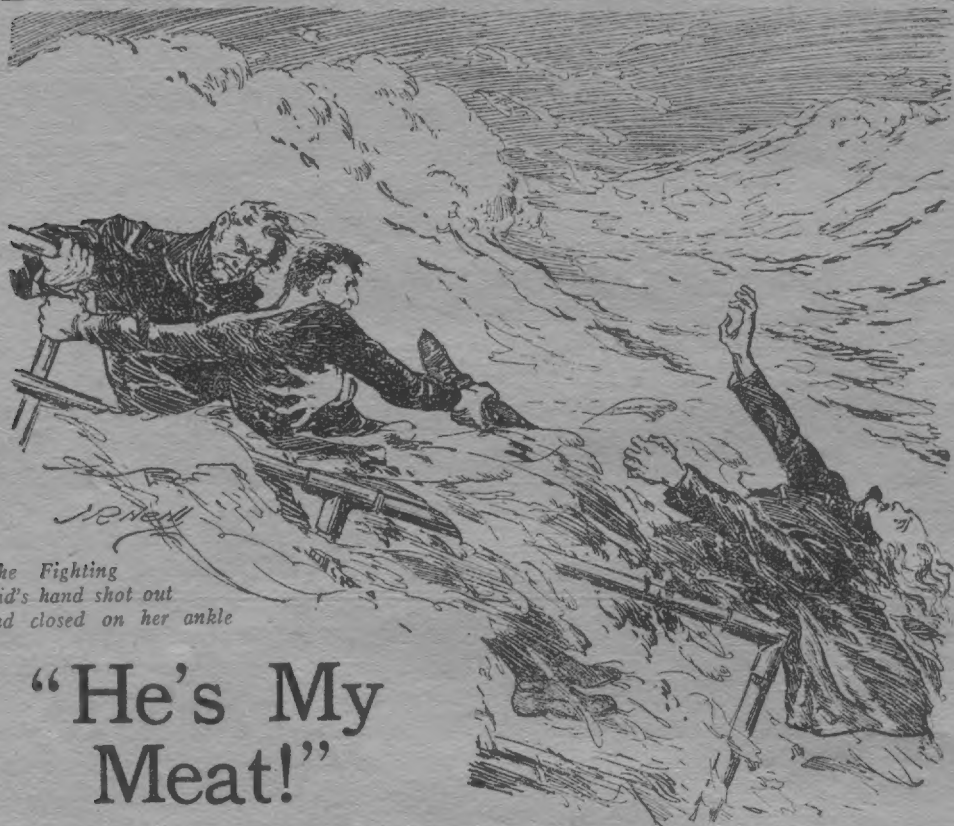
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ON SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

VOLUME 217

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1930

NUMBER 4



The Fighting
Yid's hand shot out
and closed on her ankle

"He's My Meat!"

The Boston Bean's yacht was a pleasure craft; but for him and his soldier-of-fortune comrades, Jimmie Cordie and the rest, the keenest pleasure was in warfare, against oriental pirates or War Lords or what have you

By W. WIRT

Author of "You-All Can't Have Him!" "The Nine Red Gods Decide," etc.

CHAPTER I.

AN ENGRAVED INVITATION TO TROUBLE.

"QUIT lookin' at them goofy Chink pictures and tell me about the time ye and another scout started ye a kingdom," Red Dolan

demanded from where he lay sprawled out on a couch in George Grigsby's Hongkong apartment. The couch sagged under Red's two hundred and thirty-odd pounds of bone and muscle as he turned to Jimmie Cordie, leader of the group of soldiers of fortune.

"Put a jaw tackle on, you red-headed ape," Jimmie answered absently as he picked up another of the rare Chinese prints.

"What did ye call the kingdom, Jimmie darlin'?" Red went on. He had nothing to do and wanted to be amused. Red, who had served with Jimmie Cordie in the Foreign Legion and later as a lieutenant in the A. E. F., had few loves. The first was the slim Jimmie Cordie, who was known over the Orient as "the black-eyed smiling one." The second was for any kind of a fight, anywhere and at any time—preferably with a sword as a weapon. The third was for any child or woman in distress. As a matter of fact, any female between one and one hundred and one could take a single look at the big red-headed Irishman and know that he was there to be bossed.

Red had a simple rule in life. He would ask "How about that, Jimmie?" or "What now, ye scut?" and the answer always satisfied Red. Another rule was—"Aw, slap 'em outa the way"—no matter how many or of what breed were the ones to be slapped.

"Mexerica," answered Jimmie, smiling as he looked at the picture of a hunting scene which seemed thoroughly comic to him.

"Why did ye call it that, ye shrimp?" Red went on, delighted at his success.

"Because it was an island off the Mexican coast. Quit bothering me or I'll come over there and take you apart."

"Oh, ye will, will ye? Twenty-nine Cordies all at once couldn't do that, ye black-muzzled scut. What was ye in the kingdom, Jimmie alannah?"

"Lord High Constable and Duke of Cordie. Now shut up, you know all about it."

"What was your side-kick, Bob Gunnell?"

Jimmie Cordie put down the print and sighed. "No use," he said sorrowfully. "Once that ape gets to chattering, who could stop him?"

"If that is a question," George Grigsby said, putting down a newspaper, "there is no answer known, Jeems." He was fully as big a man as Red, but not as bulky; broad-shouldered, lean-flanked, grave of face. Born in the Kentucky hills, he had been a major in the A. E. F., had been in the Foreign Legion with Jimmie and Red. He was one who fought with a little frozen smile on his lips and in his eyes. "You might as well tell him what he wants to know, Jimmie. You'll have no peace until you do."

"You're not telling me a thing," Jimmie answered, with a grin at Red. "Bob was King Robert the First, Mr. Dolan."

"How many what-do-ye-call-'em did ye have?"

"You mean subjects?"

"Here's something that may interest you, Jimmie," Grigsby interrupted. He had picked up the paper again. "It seems these high seas piracies have worn out the British patience. On March 21st the steamer Hapsang, on the way from Swatow to Hongkong, was taken and looted. British men-of-war landed a party at Bias Bay and burned a dozen buildings, which caused a lot of smoke but failed to get the pirates. The pirates in question seem to be very well organized, with the latest weapons. It is rumored that the leader is a European and that his organization, which preys on white men's steamers, is a vast one with spies and agents all over the Orient. The Hapsang makes the fifth vessel this month that—"

Grigsby's house boy, aged about seventy, entered after a low bow at the threshold. "Two vely impoltant gent'men to see Mistel Gligsby and lest," he announced, gravely. There is no "r" in the Chinese language, and few Chinese can pronounce it, save some of those who have been educated abroad.

"TWO important gentlemen to see me? Did they send in cards, Chi?"

Chi advanced and handed Grigsby two cards. Grigsby looked at them and read aloud: "Mr. Abraham Cohen. Mr. John Cabot Winthrop."

"What?" yelled Red, sitting up. "The Fighting Yid and the Boston Bean? Those scuts av the world! Wid cards—and important, are they? Wait till I get the two hands av me on that Yid. I'll 'vely impoltant' him, the—"

"Show the gentlemen in, Chi," Grigsby ordered, "with all due ceremony."

The two who stalked pompously in, their hats carried at the proper angle, were in appearance as far apart as the two poles. Mr. Abraham Cohen, who was much better known all over the Orient as the Fighting Yid, was short, stocky, with shoulders as broad as the back of a deep sea going hack of the old days. He looked roly-poly and fat, but what seemed like fat was muscle. Born on Hester Street, New York, the Yid had fought all his life, in the A. E. F. and afterward for War Lords and any other potentates he could find. He owned no nerves, very few ethics, and an uncanny ability with a machine gun and in the handling of men. He was, as Jimmie Cordie tagged him once, "a soldier of fortune—neither pure nor simple."

The Yid's eyes were china blue and

seemed always to be about to pop out of his head with surprise at what was happening in a naughty world. He wasn't surprised, though; nothing ever did surprise the Yid. That look had fooled several men to their cost.

Whenever he could, the Fighting Yid stuck around in the vicinity of Jimmie Cordie and Red Dolan; and if they were on the other side in a fight between War Lords, the Yid, as soon as he found it out, would promptly inform his employer where he could go, then, deserting to join his friends, would turn a machine gun against that War Lord with great aplomb and try to help that unlucky gentleman go where the Yid had suggested.

Mr. John Cabot Winthrop, as well known as the Yid in the places where fighting men gather, but known always as the Boston Bean or Beaneater or Codfish, was tall and lanky, with wide shoulders and lean flanks. His aristocratic face had a mournful, sorrowful look when in repose, but it concealed a reckless, happy-go-lucky spirit and chilled steel nerves.

He was a multimillionaire, thanks to his parents, and to two old maiden aunts who left him their fortunes, "so that poor dear John may not want." The fact that poor dear John's mother and father had already left him several millions made no difference to them.

The Bean had town and country houses at his disposal, apartments in several of the world's capitals, yachts and all that goes with unlimited money—and his one idea of a perfect time was to be with Jimmie Cordie and the rest where bullets and swords were singing the death song, his face smoke-blackened and his finger pressing the trigger of a machine gun. Failing to make contact with them, he would hunt up the Yid and go on an expedition

with him after anything they decided they wanted.

"So, 'tis ye, is it?" Red demanded as they both bowed gravely. "Ye are the 'impoltant' lads, are ye? Come over here, ye Yid scut, until I see what makes ye tick."

"Keep quiet, Irisher," the Yid answered loftily. "Ve are ambassadors, ain't it, Beaneater? I mean, ain't ve, Mistair Vinthrop? After, I come over und kick from you the slats, gonnif. Und if I can't, me und Jimmie can."

"Listen," the Bean reproved; "is that nice? Remember, Mr. Cohen, we are the bearers of a message; so conduct yourself accordingly. Never mind what that flannel-mouthed mick from the north of Ireland says."

"What?" yelled Red, thoroughly enjoying himself. "Ye long-legged cross between a beanpole and a—"

"Pipe down, Red," Grigsby commanded, "and let the ambassadors ambass. You have my royal permission to speak, gentlemen."

"We are bearers of an invitation for you and your questionable comrades to join Mrs. John Cabot Winthrop on the yacht Katherine Neville at once and accompany her on a cruise in the South China Sea."

"Is herself back from England?" demanded Red. "Now ye won't be jazzin' all over the lot wid this Yid omadhaun, ye scut from Bosting."

"She is, Mr. Dolan. Back and in full command. Will you kindly give us an answer as soon as possible, Mr. Grigsby? This business of being an ambassador is getting on my nerves."

"**W**AIT a minute, Codfish," Jimmie said. "Is the Katherine Neville your new boat?"

"Yes, she was built up in the Maine yards and delivered last month."

"You said the South China Sea. George was just reading about the pirates and what-not. Is the K. Neville—er—hooked up for a proper greeting to any gentlemen that might want to look her over?"

"Well," said the Bean, sadly, "of course she isn't a man-of-war, James, but she has one or two little trinkets on board."

"And what the devil do ye care, Jimmie Cordie?" demanded Red, in genuine surprise. "Wid Winchesters and our Colts we can lick all the pirates in China."

"That's right, Red, we could, without doubt. But after we did there might be a couple coming over from the Malay peninsula to run away with Mrs. John Cabot Winthrop, otherwise known as Mrs. Beaneater."

Grigsby smiled. "Maybe Red will have a sword left. I'd like to get a couple of weeks in on the water. We haven't been out to sea since—since Putt went over the one-way trail."

Jimmie looked at Grigsby and said, hastily, "I'd like to go, too. How about it, Red?"

"Ye know damn' well I would, ye scut. It reminds me of how Putt loved to get the hands av him on a wheel. Sorry the day when he—"

"Don't start, Red," Jimmie interrupted quietly. "It may be that he will be with us in spirit."

"He will," Grigsby said softly, "if there is any such thing. Our compliments to Mrs. Winthrop and we will be delighted to join her for a cruise."

"Putt" — Arthur Putney — had given his life in a narrow pass so that the rest of them, and a Manchu princess they were escorting, might live. He had been the fourth member of what was once called "a damn' close corporation" — Cordie, Dolan, Grigsby,

and Putney. Putney had been as like Grigsby as a twin brother, although he hailed from the Vermont woods. They all missed him and his quiet, easy, practical ways. His passing had left a hole that they could not seem to fill. It was as Jimmie Cordie said, "We're like a damned three-wheeled wagon without Putt"—and Jimmie rarely used profanity.

"Und now," said the Yid hastily, for he did not like any mention of spirits—unless liquid—"that the ambassin' is over, ve vill go over und let the Irisher try und do dot takin' apart thing, ain't it, Jimmie?"

"It ain't," answered Jimmie. "Don't look for any help from me, Yid. If you're man enough, hop to it."

"Vell, maybe I vait until ve get aboard und he is seasick. My, it is a long time between drinks here at Mistair Grigsby's, ain't it?"

"I couldn't offer an ambassador a drink," Grigsby answered with a smile. "If you have come back as the Fighting Yid—that's different," and he clapped his hands together once for Chi.

CHAPTER II.

PLAYTHINGS OF THE STORM.

TYPHOONS come up swiftly in the South China Sea. One minute the sea and air are calm. The next, it is as dark as midnight and the wind comes roaring and snarling from all directions. The waters are whipped into waves that tower over the ship. The graceful, luxurious yacht, one hundred and fifty feet long, powered with twin Diesel motors, and costing over four hundred thousand dollars, was the last word in efficiency in both

man and machine power. But now, as she hurtled through the darkness, caught in the teeth of a typhoon, she was as powerless as a chip tossing about in a millrace. No man power nor anything made by man can buck a South China Sea typhoon—as many a ship and its crew found out that night.

The Katherine Neville had been built stanch and true from stem to stern, as a ship should be built; and now, with battened-down hatches, she was riding it out; that was all she could do.

The young, calm-eyed English captain was at the wheel, with a quarter-master on either side of him—not that they could do anything except try to keep her nose pointed into as many of the oncoming waves as possible. More than half the time her screws and rudder were out of water.

On the bridge, clinging to the rail, stood the Boston Bean and Katherine Neville—or rather Mrs. John Cabot Winthrop. Two years before she had been rescued by the Boston Bean and the Fighting Yid from the power of a Chinese War Lord. In turn, she and the Yid and the Bean had been rescued by Jimmie Cordie and the rest. For a year, she had been the Bean's wife.

She clung to the rail with two strong little hands and her face showed no more fear than did her husband's; namely, none at all. Nevilles had put out to sea in a cockle boat to fight the Spanish Armada, and had gone down to the sea in ships for five hundred years. This dainty blond girl ran true to her breed in hours of stress. She was buttoned in oilskins to her little rounded chin.

Next to her stood the Fighting Yid and beyond him stood Red Dolan, Jimmie Cordie, and Grigsby. The wind seemed to increase while the lightning became more fork-like and jagged.

The yacht Katherine Neville spun around like a top! Suddenly it felt as if it had been lifted by a giant hand and flung straight at a wave that towered above the yacht's wireless antenna. As it hit, a cross-wind came from the port side.

Katherine was snapped from her hold exactly as the end person is snapped from the line in the old game of "crack the whip." The wind was so strong that it literally straightened her out and she left the rail like an arrow from a bow. It happened swiftly, but the Fighting Yid was swifter. One arm shot out and an iron hand closed on the ankle of a little rubber boot. But with all his grizzly bear strength, he could do no more than hold her.

Just as the wave foamed over the bow, Red Dolan let go his hold on the rail with one hand, and an arm like a python came around the Yid. He pulled in, and both Katherine and the Yid came back to the rail like rubber balls from a wall. Both of them grabbed the rail as the water surged over them.

It seemed a million years before the yacht shook itself clear, but when she did the Yid still had hold of Katherine, and Red had hold of them both.

"Thank you, Yid and Red," she gasped, as soon as she could speak. "That was a close call and—oh, my goodness!"

A vivid lightning flash had come and she had seen, looming up ahead, what looked like a dead black wall that reached higher than she could see.

"Jimmie!" yelled Red. "Are ye there, ye scut?"

"Yeah, boy," Jimmie answered. "Save your breath. You'll need—Holy cats!"

The Boston Bean reached for Katherine and got her. Now she was in-

side his arms, both facing and clinging to the rail. The yacht was lifted up and hurled at the black wall. But instead of hitting something solid, it seemed, as the lightning flashed, to be going through a pass or gut between black walls. On and on the yacht raced, and then all at once the black walls fell away and they were out of the typhoon's heart. It became light enough to see.

"JOHN! Look! We're—why, we're on a tidal wave!" Katherine called out. "We're in a valley and—"

"Tidal wave is quite correct," said the still calm-faced captain as he spun the wheel. This Englishman had commanded a mine sweeper in the North Sea. "If it will carry us as far as those sand dunes I may be able to put her down."

He stopped talking. The Katherine Neville was answering her wheel. The wave seemed to be slanting down as it roared across a valley, dashing up against the sides of hills on either side. The yacht sped on swiftly even as the water became mud-yellow. Then, all of a sudden, the yacht grounded. The water raced on through the far end of the valley, but now it was only a foot or so deep. The yacht settled between two sand dunes, as easily and softly as against the placed timbers in dry-dock.

As she did, Jimmie Cordie grinned. "Well, we've arrived right side up with care, anyway."

"Oi," the Yid grunted, as he let go of the rail. "Rides I have had it, many times, but never did I have it a ride like this von, ain't it, Jimmie?"

"Yid, for once I've got to agree with you. It was a cross between a shoot-the-chutes and a merry-go-round. What the heck is holding this baby up is beyond me."

"My goodness," Katherine said, "the sand is free of water already! John, what will we—"

"Heads up!" shouted Red from the starboard side, where he had gone to look over to see what kept the yacht almost on an even keel. "Look at 'em come!"

From the hills on the right and left side of the no longer flooded valley came columns of men. It could be seen from the yacht that these were disciplined troops. They came down at a double, in ranks of fours, led by their officers. In all, counting both parties, they numbered some one hundred men. Their bayoneted rifles glittered in the sun, which was now shining as if there had never been any such thing as a typhoon.

"Chinese," Jimmie announced. "Get your men to their battle stations, Bean. Don't show anything, though. If it comes to repelling boarders, we'll use the machine guns. No use of showing our hand unless we have to."

A moment later a bugle blew General Quarters, softly. The forty-odd men of the yacht crew and their officers started for battle stations from where they stood or sat.

The Bean's yacht was not a man-of-war, as he had told Jimmie Cordie; but there is no question but what he was telling the truth when he added that there were one or two little "trinkets" aboard. He might have said that the Katherine Neville carried the complement of a cruiser, and still would have been within the truth. And there was not a soul on board with the exception of Katherine and Ming Li, her Chinese "topside boy," who had not served in either the American or British forces, on land or sea.

"Only show two machine guns, one forward and one aft," Jimmie called

from the bridge to the Bean, who stood on the quarterdeck forward. "Line the rails with Winchesters."

The lean brown muzzle of a Brown-ing came up from behind the break-water before he had finished speaking. Red and the Yid had shed their oilskins and gone below as the bugle blew. There were some guns on the berth deck that they wanted to handle.

Grigsby stood with Jimmie on the bridge. The Bean, followed by the bugler, came up on the bridge just as the Chinese halted. They had seen the two machine guns and had also seen ten or twelve men line the rail on both starboard and port sides.

The promptness with which the yacht had shown teeth had evidently come as a surprise. A pleasure yacht, such as the Katherine Neville seemed, might reasonably be supposed to carry a brass saluting cannon, and the officers might have rifles; but to see two machine guns instantly manned and the rails lined with grim-faced men who handled Winchesters as if fully accustomed to them, was something else.

THE yacht lay between the sand dunes, her keel about ten feet above the sand. Forward and aft there was about fifty feet in the clear. The sand dunes that held her firm blocked some forty-five or fifty feet amidships, the sand coming about up to her portholes, some five feet below the spar deck level.

The Chinese stopped when within a hundred yards and the officers of both columns ran together. They looked at the yacht and at the silent men on the bridge and along the rails. There was a consultation, then an officer strode forward. He climbed up to the top of the sand dune on the port side. When he halted, he was within ten feet of the

men at the rail. Jimmie Cordie, Grigsby, and the Bean, all now wearing cartridge belts and Colt forty-fives in their holsters, walked over to the port end of the bridge. The Chinese officer saw them and called in English, "Who is in command of this ship?"

"I am," the Bean answered.

"Then from you I demand the sullendel."

"Oh, you do?" asked the Bean, gravely. "Are you speaking as an officer of the Chinese National army?"

"I am speaking fo' myself. Sullendel this ship at once. If you do not I will take it and all who survive will suffel Ling-Chi, the death of a thousand cuts. You cannot fight one hundred men."

"That's quite a lot of men," the Bean answered. "You say you speak for yourself. Just who are you?"

"Let me take the deck, Bean," Jimmie Cordie said softly. As he spoke, his .45 Colt seemed to leap into his hand. Before the Chinese officer could move, he was staring straight into the round black muzzle.

"Come on board," Jimmie commanded. There was death in the voice although it was not raised above a conversational level. And there was death in the cold black eyes behind the Colt. The Chinese officer knew it and without making the slightest attempt to draw the gun in his own holster, he stepped as close to the rail as he could.

"Help him over," Jimmie commanded, leaning over the bridge rail so he could see. "That's right: bring him up here."

The Chinese columns had joined on the port side, a little forward and to the right of the sand dune. They saw the action, but were too far away to hear what had been said. As the officer disappeared in the arms of two husky sailors, another officer snarled an order

and drew his gun. Down came the bayonets and the Chinese charged straight at the sand dune and up the sides.

As the officer drew, the Bean said to the bugler, "Commence firing," and the bugler blew the call. The two men guarding the Chinese officer were at the foot of the bridge ladder with him when the machine gun, forward, went into action. The aft gun had no target, to the deep disappointment of its crew. The riflemen on the starboard side ran through the superstructure to port so as to get in the fight.

"Disarm him and take him below," Jimmie ordered, as he saw the men and the officer. Then he ran back to the end of the bridge, his Colt already going *pow-pow-pow*! There were few men in the Orient that could equal Jimmie Cordie with a Colt.

RED DOLAN and the Yid, seeing there was no chance to fight one of the heavier guns, came up on deck like two jacks-in-the-box and ran to the bow. The Yid had a Winchester, which was the weapon he liked next best, and Red had a .45 Colt.

"'Tis fooled we are, Yid," Red mourned. "They didn't wait for us, the spridhagues."

Red had a right to be sad, loving a fight as he did. There were few of the Chinese left by the time he and the Yid arrived. It was a foolhardy charge, this charge of one hundred men against a machine gun and twenty-odd Winchesters. The rest of the Bean's crew were at their battle stations.

It would have been foolhardy even if the men behind the guns were amateurs. But with men serving the weapons who could qualify for the Distinguished Marksman's badge, it was suicide.

The Chinese fell away like leaves from a tree in the fall winds. The charge had not won halfway up the dune when all who could, turned and ran down and across the valley. None of them would have reached the shelter of the hills if Grigsby had not suggested, softly, yet regretfully, "Cease firing, Bean."

The Bean gave the bugler the order and a moment later the yacht was still.

"Get a first aid party over the side, Codfish," Jimmie said. "If any of the wounded can walk, start them back to where they came from."

Red and the Yid arrived on the bridge. "Oi, Jimmie, such a business! Vy didn't it you tell Red und me dot you was goin' to cut loose mit only de poppers?"

"Why didn't you and that big ape stick around? You high-tailed down to get the chance of playing with those three-inch babies, didn't you?"

"Well, ye cross between a small-sized chimpanzee and a flat-faced gibbon," began Red, "ye start off wid-out—"

"Tell him about it later," Grigsby interrupted. "We'd better get at the how-come of this as fast as we can. This boat lies in an exposed position if the welcome committee here have any heavy guns. Let's get below and see if we can get some dope from the gent who asked us to surrender."

The Bean had been talking to Captain Paulet. "We'll darned soon know about where we are," he announced, as he rejoined the group at the end of the bridge. "Paulet will shoot the sun and—"

"Me, I am going to shoot a tall cold von," the Yid interrupted, firmly. "Wot with de ride und den gettin' fooled mit de fightin', I need von, ain't it, Jimmie?"

"It certainly is, Mr. Cohen. Let's go get it."

CHAPTER III.

WAR LORD OF PIRATES.

UP in the hills at the end of the valley, an Englishman was lying flat on the ground close beside a big boulder. As he looked through field glasses at the yacht, he talked to the Russian beside him. Both were dressed in white linen, cut like a naval officer's whites. Both wore the pith helmet of the tropics.

"She's tight between two sand dunes. My word! That yacht's a beauty. There go Tzu-kung and his men. I say, did you hear that, Boris?"

"No. What?" the Russian asked in a thick voice.

"I couldn't tell, but it sounded like a bugle note. Hullo, she's going to show fight. There's a machine gun coming up forward—and one aft. By Jove, the rails are lined with men. Well, Tzu-kung has enough men to eat her up. He'd jolly well better obey orders. He's stopped and gone forward alone. Probably to demand her surrender."

"I say! He shouldn't leave his men bunched that way, the bloomin' ass. It's hard to teach these bounders any sense. . . . He's going on board. May the foul fiend fly away with these glasses! He's—there they go! At least I've taught them to charge; they'll—my God! Look at them go down! Hear that fire? That's from men who know how to shoot. It's—no—yes, by gad, it's over! They run, the blighters, those who can."

He lowered his glasses and turned so that he could see the other man. Even in this reverse there was a smile on his handsome English face. The

eyes, though, were a little too close together and the lips a trifle full.

"Your remark, my dear Radischev, about the gods having brought us a plum on the crest of the tidal wave may have been a little erroneous. The plum has turned out to be a lemon, what, what?"

Boris Radischev, a Russian Communist sent to China to further the Red cause, smiled also as he answered in good English, "From your description of the attack, it is very probable you are right about the kind of fruit, Henry. I would like to have seen it. If this inflammation of my eyes does not get better, I do not know what I will do. You say few came back?"

"Not more than ten," answered Henry Warrenne, young son of a noble English family. Waster and remittance man, he had been cashiered from the army, expelled from clubs and all social life, and now was the leader of Chinese pirates. He had been born a gentleman, lived like a rotter, and there was nothing he would not do or had not done to gratify his lusts. There was only one good thing he had and that was the courage that went with his name. "Let's be getting back, old thing."

Radischev had come to the headquarters of the pirates to see if he could not get Warrenne to throw his men and ships in with the Communists who at the moment were sweeping through China toward Hankow like a plague of rats, devouring and destroying all that stood in their way.

Radischev had offered Warrenne a free hand in slaying and looting. But Warrenne had laughed and answered, "I have that now, wherever I am strong enough to make it stick, old top. Can the Soviet show me some gold? Say a million pounds. If it can, I will

put two thousand men and twelve ships at their disposal."

Radischev had said that the Soviet could, but that he did not have the authority to send for it. He would send a messenger for a commissionaire to meet Warrenne in Peking or Hong-kong.

While waiting for an answer, Radischev stayed with Warrenne, liking very much the "wine, women and song" that Warrenne could and did offer in unlimited quantity.

THE pair reached Warrenne's headquarters before the last of the fleeing party of Chinese. It was more like an orderly village than the lair of pirates. The houses were laid out in streets; the docks at which several vessels were tied were clean and orderly. Uniformed soldiers patrolled the streets and docks, much like British bobbies on the streets of London. They were Chinese, young men, with the alert look that is common now in "young China."

Back of the village proper there were long lines of tents and over at one side, an artillery park. Most of the guns in it were old muzzle-loaders of the vintage of the first part of the Eighteenth Century, but here and there were batteries of modern guns, among them some French seventy-fives taken from a French supply ship that Warrenne had captured.

The tidal wave had carried the Katherine Neville to the east side of the island, which was fringed by a range of mountains. By the grace of whatever gods have the lives of ships in their hands, the yacht had been hurled through a pass and into the valley. The floor of the pass, in ordinary water was some twelve feet above high tide. The wave had covered it many feet and the

yacht had gone through with plenty of water under her keel. The range spread out from the pass and almost surrounded the valley, then went back to the sea on an angle. The west side of the island was free from mountains and faced the coast of Anam, below Hué.

Warrenne was sitting at a plain table in front of the stone house he used as headquarters when the fugitives came up. There were twelve of them, all young men. None of them carried their rifles, having thrown them away in the frantic effort to get beyond reach of the yacht's deadly guns.

They lined up in front of him, came to attention and saluted. Their young faces were gray and their lips livid; they knew that Warrenne was merciless. Behind Warrenne there was lined a company of infantry. Radischev was not in sight, having gone to bathe his inflamed eyes.

"You have left your rifles somewhere?" Warrenne asked, silkily, in perfect Chinese.

A man answered, "We charged, Lord of the World. We charged and met the fire from machine guns. When there was no chance for us to take the ship, we—we—"

"Why hesitate, Meng? You what?"

"We—we ran, Mighty One. If you can find it in your resplendent heart to have mercy on—"

"I can find no mercy for dogs who run," Warrenne interrupted. "Why did Tzu-kung go on board?"

"One of the foreign devils who stood on the bridge pointed a revolver at Captain Tzu-kung and ordered him to come aboard."

"Ordered him! I see. Now, you who ran: run now—out on that pier." He pointed to a long pier that went out into the shark-infested water. "And

when you get to the end, see if you can run over the water to Anam. Start—unless you prefer the boiling oil death."

The dozen Chinese turned and ran out on the pier. There was nothing else they could do. Out, and into the water. The fins of sharks came in sight almost as soon as the bodies struck the water, and in less than a minute, there was a flurry and splashing. Then the water became red in spots.

Warrenne sat with impassive face until the onlookers who had been near the pier turned away. Then he beckoned to the captain of the infantry company. He came forward and saluted. "Bring Wang-sun to me," Warrenne ordered curtly.

The captain returned in a few minutes with an elderly Chinaman who was not in uniform. "You may dismiss your company," Warrenne said. The captain saluted and retired.

"SIT down, honorable elder brother," Warrenne said.

The old Chinese obeyed, his wrinkled face placid. He began fanning himself with an ivory-handled fan as he said, "Yes, it is wise that you go to the ship that now lies on dry land and see for yourself what she is."

"Where you get the power of reading my mind like that is beyond me, honorable one. You are a mighty soothsayer. I will go, then. Do I not always follow your counsel?"

Wang-sun did not answer, his eyes now looking out over the waters.

"I will go under a flag of truce," Warrenne finally went on. "That is all, elder brother." The Chinese left.

Radischev had come up in time to hear the last of it, and he smiled as he sat down.

"Do you believe in that sort of thing, Henry?" he asked.

"I don't know whether I do or not. That old heathen Wang-sun has foretold lots of things. He can look at a man and read what is in that man's mind. I've seen him do it a hundred times."

"We have them in Russia," Radischev answered indifferently. "What are you going to do about the yacht—shell it?"

"No, not yet. I'm going in with a flag of truce and take a look. It may be that I can decoy them away from her. If I can, I'd try and float her."

"You would—how?"

"By bringing her over here. Bigger boats than she have been hauled inland, old thing."

"I know, but—"

"Take her to the cañon and through it. From there it is easy—a straight down-hill pull to the water. But there are some hurdles to jump, first," Warrenne added with a smile.

"Will you try to get the crew to join you?"

Warrenne shook his head. "No, they are either Yank or British. Yank for choice, as the boat has Yank lines. They wouldn't join, Radischev. I will do to them what I have always done to all others but the Chinese: turn them over to the executioners."

"That is wise," Radischev answered. "It is a true saying that dead men tell no tales."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOARD OF STRATEGY.

JIMMIE CORDIE, the Bean, Red Dolan, Grigsby and the Yid sat on one side of a long mahogany table in the library of the Katherine Neville. Captain Paulet had shot the sun and got the position of the island.

"Longitude 110 and latitude 10. We are on an island. We must have blown directly south through the Formosa Strait," he had reported.

Now, as they waited for two sailors to bring up the Chinese officer, Jimmie said, "We can't be such a heck of a ways from the coast of lower Indo-China. I have a hunch that we've landed right—"

The sailors brought the Chinese officer up to the table, saluted and went out.

The officer's face was impassive as he stood at attention, his eyes at gaze.

Grigsby spoke first. "What is your name?" he asked, courteously.

"Tzu-kung."

"Your rank?"

"Captain."

"What service?"

"I will not answer."

"I will answer for you. You are in the service of the pirates who make this island their headquarters. Do you know the fate that captured pirates meet?"

"Yes."

"Then, if you do not tell us on what island we are, and what force is on it, you will swing from the yardarm in five minutes."

"I will not tell you foreign devils anything."

"And yet you are led by a foreign devil," Grigsby said, quietly. It was a shot in the dark, but it landed. The officer's eyes widened:

"You know that? Then why ask me?"

Red leaned across the Bean and whispered to Jimmie, "How did George know that, Jimmie?"

"Guessed it from the uniform and equipment. Keep still, Red."

"What is his name?" Grigsby continued his grilling.

"I see no leason why you should not know. My leadel's name is Wallenne."

"Warrenne, eh? What force has he and what guns?"

"I will not tell you."

"You hang, then."

"I am not afraid to die. I would die happy if I could take with me some of you foleign devils. Wallenne will avenge my death on youl bodies."

"It may be," answered Grigsby calmly. "You want to question this man, Jimmie?"

"No. Call your men in, Codfish, and have him put in irons. We may be able to use him in some way."

As the Chinese captain was being taken out, Katherine came in. She heard Jimmie saying, "And if this gent has any artillery, he can place it up on the top of any of those hills and blow us halfway up the golden stairs."

"If who has, Jimmie?" Katherine asked as she sat down next to the Bean.

"Warrenne," Jimmie answered. "We got the name of the chief pirate out of the gent that is visiting us. We've lit right smack in the middle of a pirate island, Mrs. Winthrop. Chances are that he will come over to take a look-see as soon as word gets to him about the way we greeted his assistant pirates. He may come close, or he may not; depends on his nerve."

"He has plenty of that, Jimmie," Katherine said quietly, "if it is Henry Warrenne. All the Warrennes have. It must be he, because I've heard that he—"

"For Pete's sake! You know him, Katherine?"

"Yes, all my life. Their place in Essex joined ours. The Nevilles and the Warrennes have known each other for five hundred years, Jimmie."

"Vich is some knowin'," put in the Yid.

"He wasn't like this when we were little," Katherine went on. "He seemed to change when he was about sixteen. I haven't seen him since I was fourteen. He went away to school. Once he came home and—and made love to me. He said that he always had loved me," she went on hurriedly. "It is hard for the English to talk about such things, but Katherine felt that the big, tanned, tight-lipped soldiers of fortune, who were to her as brothers, ought to know all they could about this pirate."

"What kind of a bird was he?" Jimmie asked. "Easy to frame?"

"To frame? I don't—oh, you mean was he easy to spoof?"

"That's it—spoof," Jimmie answered with a grin. "Was he?"

"No, Jimmie. Just the opposite. We never could fool him in the games we used to play. He is very clever."

"Well, that's something to go on. Here's what old General Cordie says. To wait and let him bring up heavy guns and post them on the hills would be a darned bad error in strategy. At the minute he doesn't know where he's at. I say to unload some of the Beaneater's heavy trinkets over the side pronto and in great haste, and get them on top of those three hills. Once there we can make it darned unpleasant for him to try to place any guns on the others. We can take up Brownings, also. Leave gun crews up there with the guns. That will take, say, thirty men. It stops any shelling of the yacht until after he has mopped up—and that will be one hard thing to do. If he attacks, the men on the yacht can go to their help."

"RIGHT ye are, ye scut," Red announced. "'Tis what I had in me mind. Come on, let's get 'em out and—"

"I knew you figured it, Red," Jim-

mie said with a smile at his big Irish comrade. "I beat you to it in the telling, that's all. Now, question: can we get set up there before he comes over to take the said look-see? It takes time to drag four-inch rifles up hills, gents, and our mule power is represented in Red, the Bean, and the Yid. George and I, being ginerals, couldn't be expected—"

"Me?" Red demanded. "A mule, is it? If ye was bigger than a half-baked shrimp, ye omadhaun, I'd show ye about mules."

"Und dot goes double for me," the Yid said with a smirk. "Maybe-so de Codfisher vill—"

The Bean looked at Jimmie gravely. He started at Jimmie's feet and slowly looked all the way up to his hair, then shook his head. "Perhaps if the three of us would jump him all at once we could make him—"

"Listen," interrupted Grigsby, "do your kidding later. Get on with it, Jimmie."

"Hearing and obeying," Jimmie said with a grin as Katherine wrinkled her pretty nose at him. "I say to get the guns up there, right now. Many a battle has been lost, gents, by saying 'Let's wait until.' The lads that run may not have got all the way home yet—and Warrenne's got to come all the way back. If we step on it, we may get set before he shows. Then we are in a position to take the play away from him. My thought is to decoy him and his merry army into the valley and then give them all we've got from both hill and yacht. Afterward we will go through to his headquarters, take a ship and yorricks and away."

"Oh!" Katherine stood up, her eyes shining. "Let's do it right away."

They all laughed and as they rose the Yid said, "Vait. If ve got it two

ginerals ve might as vell have it a admiral. Katherine is Admiral Vinthrop, or I von't play."

"No playee, no eatee, Mr. Cohen," Jimmie announced. "You and Red get below on those guns you wanted to shoot so badly this morning. Admiral Winthrop, will you see that they stay on the job, please, sir?"

CHAPTER V.

BRIEF TRUCE.

WARRENNE had not hurried. He knew that the yacht or the people on her could not get away from the island. The people might, on a raft, but to do it they would have to face the surf on the west side. He strode slowly along with only two officers. It was roughly some five miles as the crow flies, seven or eight on foot across the mountains. There were no horses on the island, so Warrenne walked.

"When we get to the cañon," he said, "I will go forward, alone. I am going in under a flag of truce. You remain here until I return. It may be that these men who hold the ship will not recognize a white flag. If they do not, you may return and bring up your regiments. We will take her, this time."

When they got to the opening in the hills, he walked forward alone. It did not occur to him to look up at the tops of the three highest hills that commanded all the others. There was nothing in his mind to make him do so. As he came out into the valley, he stopped, took from his pocket a white cloth about the size of a pillow case, and waved it.

In a minute or so, there was a white flag waved from the yacht.

Warrenne smiled scornfully as he walked toward the yacht. The smile was erased from his face and a frown took its place as he saw a figure dressed in the uniform of a captain, with a black cloth over the head, dangling and swaying from the wireless mast. As a matter of fact it was a dummy, dressed in Tzu-kung's clothes; but to Warrenne it was the body of Tzu-kung.

"Curse the beggars!" he said, through tight lips.

As he climbed up the sand dune and walked as close as he could to the yacht rail, his keen eyes looked her over from bow to stern. She looked like any millionaire's hundred-and-fifty-footer. There were one or two sailors in evidence, both forward and aft. No one on the bridge and no guns in sight at all.

A plank had been run from the deck to the sand dune and a section of rail removed. On the yacht, standing by the rail, was a tall, lanky man, dressed in yachting clothes. The man called, "Come right on board. It is far too hot for you to stand out there, Mr.—"

"Warrenne," answered the renegade, politely, as he stepped on the plank. "Henry Warrenne. And you?"

"I am John C. Winthrop, Mr. Warrenne. Come on board."

Warrenne, as he reached the yacht's deck, stopped and looked at the Boston Bean, then laughed. "I say—that's a bally good one, what? You are the Boston Bean, aren't you?"

The Bean grinned. "That's right, I am. I didn't think I was so well known."

"It is my business to know things, Mr. Winthrop. And this is your new yacht, the Katherine Neville, that was sent you from Maine not long ago.

I—no wonder my one hundred men got 'eaten up,' as the jolly old Zulus used to say. May I ask if Mr. Cordie, Mr. Dolan and Mr. Grigsby are on board? It is rather a foolish question after seeing or rather hearing the machine guns start to work, isn't it?"

"Yes, they are on board, Mr. Warrenne. Also Mr. Abraham Cohen."

"No, you are not by any chance spoofing me, are you? The Fighting Yid! My sainted aunt, what a haul!"

"You haven't pulled the net in yet," the Bean answered gravely. "Come below and meet the gentlemen, Mr. Warrenne."

"I will be very glad to, Winthrop, and while *en route*, let me tell you that I do not need to pull in the net. The tidal wave did that for me."

The Bean said soberly, "Be careful how you reach in to take the fish out, Mr. Warrenne. I have heard that there are very poisonous fish in these waters."

"I will be," answered Warrenne, with a smile. Whatever else he lacked, he had two things: courage, and a sardonic sense of humor.

JIMMIE, Red, Grigsby and the Yid rose as the Bean ushered Warrenne into the library.

"This gentleman came from the hills under a flag of truce," the Bean said, "which I acknowledged from the bridge. He is under it until he returns to the hills. His name is Henry Warrenne. Mr. Warrenne, from left to right, these gentlemen are Mr. Cordie, Mr. Dolan, Mr. Grigsby and Mr. Cohen. May I ask you to be seated?"

As they all sat down, Warrenne looked curiously at the men whose exploits and fighting ability were known all over the Orient.

They looked at him with impassive

faces—faces like those of officers sitting on a court-martial.

"Why do you come to this yacht under a flag of truce, Mr. Warrenne?" Grigsby curtly demanded.

"Because I want to see who it was that destroyed one hundred of my men; also to find out what the yacht had, besides machine guns and rifles," Warrenne answered calmly.

Whatever plans Warrenne had made before had vanished when he found out who was on the yacht. Jimmie Cordie laughed. "A direct answer to a direct question, Mr. Warrenne. You have seen who the men are. We regret that we cannot show you more guns than you say you have heard or seen. I don't remember seeing you in the charge."

"I was on top of one of the hills, Mr. Cordie, with glasses. Near enough to hear a little and see quite a lot. That reminds me, you hung Captain Tzu-kung?"

"Did you see him at the wireless?" Jimmie answered. "Sorry we didn't have the regulation yardarm, that all pirates eventually swing from."

Warrenne laughed. "Not at all, Mr. Cordie. I am sorry you thought it necessary to execute Tzu-kung. I am afraid that the Chinese will insist on reprisal."

"Vell," said the Yid, with one of his smirks, "never mind, Mistair Warrenne, ve save it a place for you on de vireless."

"And if that don't satisfy the likes av ye," Red, who had been staring at Warrenne out of frosty, hostile eyes, stated, "I'll take ye apart wid me two hands and scatter the pieces around, ye black-hearted scut av a—"

"Steady, Red," Grigsby said quietly; "and you also, Yid. This man is under a flag of truce."

"And well for him he is," growled Red.

Warrenne laughed. "The bull and the bear, what, what? Led by the nose. Well, listen, Mr. Bull and Mr. Bear, I stopped being frightened by animals some time ago. If either one of you or both of you would like—"

"Steady for you, also," Grigsby interrupted, sternly now. "Unless you wish to start for the hills. You are under a flag of truce for safe-conduct. If you violate it—"

Katherine Winthrop entered the room. "Oh, John, I beg your pardon. I have been asleep and didn't know that any one—why, it's Henry Warrenne!"

Warrenne rose, his eyes wide with astonishment. "You, Katherine! Here with these men! What does it mean? I thought you were in England. My word, I'm glad to see you," and he advanced with outstretched hand, ignoring the men in the room.

Katherine held up a slender little hand. "No, Henry. You have forfeited the right to do that—ever."

Warrenne stopped as if hit by a bullet. His hand dropped and his face grew white. "So you are like all the rest, are you?" he asked. "I am not fit to touch you, now? Well, by the red bull of Warrenne, I will make you—"

The Boston Bean stepped in front of Katherine, facing Warrenne. He had to stoop a little to get his eyes on a level with those of the renegade, who was plainly almost beside himself with anger.

"I find nothing," the Bean said, very softly, "in a flag of truce that prevents a man from saving his wife annoyance. Address yourself to me, Mr. Warrenne. Better yet, waive your rights and let me get you a Colt .45."

We can argue the matter further, out on the sand."

WARRENNE did not give back an inch, at first. It was evident that he was getting hold of himself. Finally he stepped back and smiled, then bowed to Katherine, who had stepped to the Bean's side.

"I am more than sorry if in any way I have offended you, Mrs. Winthrop. Please accept my most humble apologies." Then he looked at the Bean. "That Colt thing will have to wait, old dear. I cannot waive my rights just at the moment. There is business toward."

He looked at the men sitting at the table, at Katherine again and then at the Boston Bean.

"All right," he said, in the rasping voice of an officer on the parade ground. "Here it is. Surrender this yacht to me, now, and I will let you live. Don't, and I will take it, and you will die under torture if you are alive after the assault. You know who I am, I see. What you don't know is that I have some two thousand trained men and three thousand more at call on the China Sea. I do not—"

"Vell," interrupted the Yid, "if de two t'ousand and the t'ree t'ousand ain't no better than the vons you sent to say it mit bayonets, maybe-so ve mop up on dem and come and get you for de vireless, Mistair Tough Guy."

"Cut it out, Yid," Jimmie said, with a grin that he couldn't suppress. "Let him get it out of his system. Go ahead, Mr. Warrenne. You were just past the place where we all die by torture when Mr. Cohen interrupted."

Warrenne looked at Jimmie and then laughed, with real amusement. "I have heard much about you, Mr. Cordie," he said. The rasp was gone

from his voice. "It will give me great pleasure to see you, as you Yanks put it, 'strut your stuff.' I was going to say that I do not care how many guns or men you have hidden on this yacht. For every one you have, I have twenty. You cannot fight against such odds. Surrender now and you may live."

"I will speak for all," Katherine said, her head held proudly. "We will not surrender. We are not afraid of you or of your thousands of men and your guns. If we can, we will—we will do what the Fighting Yid says. We will hang you to the wireless for a pirate."

"Und dot," said the Yid, "is Admiral Vinthrop speaking, Mistair Warrenne."

"Is that your decision, gentlemen?" Warrenne asked.

"Yes," answered the Boston Bean.

"Yes," from Jimmie and George at the same time.

"It is," Red said, grimly. "Watch the steps av ye carefully, ye scut av the world. I'm comin' to get ye for the wireless."

"Und me vid him," added the Yid.

Warrenne bowed, a courtly bow he had learned in a stately old English castle before he had gone bad. "That being the case," he said calmly, "I will go back to the hills."

Neither the men nor Katherine returned his bow, and as they stood there with immobile faces Warrenne turned on his heel and left the room. The Bean followed him and escorted him to the plank without a word. Warrenne was silent until he stepped on the sand dune. Then he smiled and said, "Touching that Colt .45 thing—you need not get one for me. I prefer a Webley, old topper. See that you have your Colt in your hand when we meet next."

"I will," answered the Bean gravely, his thin face mournful. "Come and see us again—without the flag." His face may have looked sorrowful, but the Bean's heart was singing with the joy of a fight to come.

CHAPTER VI.

BRINGING UP THE BIG GUNS.

FRENCH seventy-fives and four- and five-inch rifles are heavy pieces of ordnance; but the pyramids were built by man power, and the Chinese, under the stimulus of Warrenne's stern presence, moved them forward little by little to the hills.

The formation of the island leading up to the hills, especially the three high ones that commanded the valley, made it possible to get the guns almost up to them through a fairly wide, gently sloping pass—the one of which Warrenne had said, "a straight down-hill pull to the water."

"I do not like it, Yang-lu," an officer said to his second in command as they stood on a little knoll watching the toiling lines of men dragging the guns along the skids. "It is too quiet. Many tales I have heard of these foreign devils. It does not seem possible that they would lie supine and let us mount guns that will destroy the ship in which they came."

"I do not like it either, O Shun. I was at Ta-hsiang when those men fought for General Peng Teh-hue. There they led us into an ambush and few escaped. It was told me that the Englishman spoke to the Russian about them when he returned. He mentioned their names. The ones called the—the—*aie*, what names!—called the 'Fighting Yid' and the 'Boston Bean' are the most to be feared for what he

called the 'flame'—I cannot say it. For tricks, that is it. All of them fight like wounded leopards. If we take the ship, elder brother, what profit to us?"

"I know not. Yet there is less profit if we do not, Yang-lu. See, here comes the Englishman. Hurry your men."

Warrenne came up, Radischev with him and a few officers.

"Too slow, Shun," he said curtly. "Your men are not working up to the limit. Put men with whips among them. Start those five-inch guns up the hill to your right."

After he gave the order he walked away, followed by his staff.

After he had gone, Shun looked at his second, "Whips," he said softly. "Whips . . . It may be that some day the—"

"He looks back, elder brother," warned Yang-lu as he started for the men.

Warrenne went along the lines of men, giving orders for more speed to the officers. He intended to place the guns, shell all around the yacht to show the men on it that they had no chance, and afterward send his men in to take it. He wanted the yacht as little damaged as possible; but most of all he wanted Katherine Winthrop.

To him, it was a simple matter. He would break the morale of the crew and the men who had defied him, he would take the yacht, slay all the men, take the girl he had always wanted and bring the yacht overland to his headquarters. That the Boston Bean or any of the others would kill Katherine rather than let her fall into his hands he knew, but that chance he had to take.

He would advance his men under cover of a barrage and trust to the quick taking of the yacht to prevent that misplay. The expression in the

eyes of the men who had sat behind the table, and the tone of voice with which the Bean had spoken to him, had dug deep under his skin. He wanted to see and hear them scream under torture if they were still alive when he took the yacht.

"Very good," he said to the colonel in command, as the last seventy-five reached the foot of the hills. "Take two up on this side."

A BUGLE blew "Commence firing," and the crowded pass became an inferno of bursting high explosive shells and machine gun bullets. From each of the three commanding hills came the fire. It was fast and absolutely merciless: one- and two-pound rapid fire guns, three-inch rifles, and, worst of all, the deadly sleet of steel-jacketed machine gun bullets.

The men around Warrenne's guns had absolutely no chance. They went down in heaps as they milled around. Shells landed squarely on the guns and burst to send steel fragments in all directions. It was a massacre—nothing else.

There was no chance to fight back.

The men pulling on the ropes had laid aside their rifles and the officers had only their side arms. Warrenne had failed in one of the most essential points of strategy: he had not sent advance parties up the hills to occupy them while he was bringing up his guns.

He knew the men on the yacht, at least by reputation, and he should have realized that they would not let him plant heavy guns to command the situation if they could prevent it. That they too could have heavy guns had never dawned upon him. He knew they probably had machine guns other than those they had shown, but he had

not dreamed that they would leave the yacht to do the fighting rather than remain on the defensive.

As the firing started he was a little over to one side. The first shell came from the hill on which the bugle had blown. He looked up and shouted an order. "Peng! Take your men—"

The other hills joined in, and Warrenne knew that he had been caught. There was no need to order a retreat. His pirates were fighting men, highly organized and disciplined; they were under his eyes; and yet, in that hell of flame and steel, they reverted, as all men do, to the animal instinct to save themselves. The noise, the flame, the flying steel that were deafening, burning and tearing them, wiped all else from their brains but the desire for a place to hide from it.

They ran in all directions and Warrenne and the officers ran with them. As they scattered out, the heavy gunfire ceased. But the machine guns went on with the *rat-tat-rat-tat-tat!*

There had been some five hundred men with the big guns. Now, as they ran, there were less than four hundred. Warrenne and Radischev were fairly close to a little foothill, and they made it safely around a curve—though not before Radischev had taken a bullet in his left arm and Warrenne's pith helmet had jumped from his head.

The Yid, who was firing the machine gun that tried for them, grunted in disgust, "Oi, vot shootin'. Maybe-so I go to de old man's home, ain't it?"

As a matter of fact the Yid did more than well when he got that close to them. He was six hundred yards away and up on top of a hill. They were running fast and he had to swing his gun around and shoot from an almost impossible angle to try for them at all. But to the Yid, the fact that he missed

them as much as he did was very displeasing. As it was, he blasted away the lives of the officers a little to one side of Warrenne and Radischev.

Warrenne climbed up to the top of the foothill and flung himself full length on the ground where he could look over the crest.

His face was white and like that of a devil. He, Warrenne, leader of pirates, a man who had trapped many a ship and many a land force sent against him, had been ambushed like a coolie in a dark alley. He saw his guns, some dismounted now. He saw the bodies of his men, saw the survivors fleeing. He saw the relentless machine guns pick up group after group and destroy them; and the foam literally seeped through his lips. He knew that it was his fault, and that made it worse.

Then he saw, from each hill, a line of uniformed men, dressed in natty navy whites, armed with bayoneted rifles and cutlasses, and led by three officers, start down the hill at the double. One of the officers he recognized as the Boston Bean.

Disregarding the chance of getting a machine gun bullet, Warrenne jumped up, drawing his Webley.

Then he came back to his senses. He knew that he could not stop the charge by himself. If he stayed, he would surely die. He was not afraid, but he wanted to live to capture the men who had shown their contempt for him. He turned and ran down the foothill.

Radischev was already on his way to headquarters. Warrenne shouted as he passed some of the officers who had not run as fast as the men, waiting to see what he would do.

"Get back! Get back! Order Tsing's regiment forward to the mouth of the cañon! Order Ling to land all men on the ships and support him!"

As he ran, his one thought was to retake his guns if he could before they were put entirely out of commission. The inevitable loss of men meant absolutely nothing to him. There were plenty of men. What made him physically sick was the thought of the smiles that would be on the lips of the men who had tricked him.

"I—I will cut them off," he panted, as he ran. "I will make them eat the—" He stopped talking and ran.

"AND that's that," the Boston Bean said, as the charge stopped at the guns. "No use in chasing them around the corner. He may have some support back there."

"Oi, vot a sucker he is," the Yid announced. He had left his gun and joined in the charge down the hill when he saw Red Dolan start. "If he is a fighter, I am a—"

"Hester Street A. P. A.," Jimmie Cordie interrupted. "Who told you to leave that gun, you ape?"

"Oi, Jimmie! It vos all over, ain't it? I see the Irisher start and I come to protect him," and the Fighting Yid smirked.

"Oh, you did? All right, Yid; some one had to go along to protect Mrs. Dolan's little boy. He—"

Captain Paulet and his men were destroying the mechanism of the French seventy-fives and the other guns, and Jimmie stopped as he watched them.

"Man, howdy," he said. "I hate to see guns like those get ruined. They're darned near human."

"If you had spoken about it a minute before, James," the Bean said, mournfully, "we could have saved them for Mr. Warrenne. Had you rather face what comes out of them?"

Jimmie laughed. "That will be about all, Codfish. Wait a minute; he's

got to come up this way to get to the—no, he hasn't at that, unless he got some more modern— We could hold 'em right here. No, not so good. There may be twenty other ways of getting to the valley."

"All of which is plain as mud," the Bean said. "Let's get back and hold a council of war."

Red Dolan walked with the Fighting Yid. "'Tis wan devil av a thing," he said bitterly, "that it is only wance in so often that ye will find any av them damn' Chinks that will stand up to ye. Wouldn't ye think now that some av them scuts would have waited for us?"

"Vell," said the Yid seriously. "maybe-so they didn't like vot ve started to play vid dem vid."

That night a message was sent, carried by a wounded Chinaman: "Speaking of surrender—come and get hanged." It was signed, "Admiral Winthrop."

When Warrenne read it his eyes narrowed. He was back in headquarters and had regained control of himself. He had already lost more than two hundred men, his French seventy-fives, his four- and five-inch rifles, and, what was more important, he had lost some of the confidence of his men.

"It's only the first round," he said aloud. "You win it. I know now that you have more than two machine guns. So—I'll see if I can't arrange something to turn your flank, old dears."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.



Sugar Catches Gas Thieves

PLAIN brown sugar has proved embarrassing to gasoline thieves. Captain Maxwell of the Ontario Provincial Air Force reports that it is the best anti-theft remedy they've ever tried. For the use of the pilots on the fire patrol the Air Force has placed caches of petrol and oil at many out-of-the-way places along the waterways in Northern Ontario. As there seemed almost no chance of being caught at it, some dishonest owners of outboard motors soon formed the habit of helping themselves from the gas caches, with the result that when the pilots were at work on a fire and needed the gas in a hurry, they often found their caches empty or nearly so.

In one of the districts where they had been having the most trouble, the Air Force finally tried the scheme of carefully hiding their own supply of gas and oil. Then at each cache they left out in the open two drums, one for petrol and one for oil, in which the gas had been well doctored with brown sugar and the oil with syrup. Results soon followed. In two days one of the suspects appealed to an Air Force mechanic for help with a "seized" motor. The mechanic freeing the stuck motor found telltale traces of sugar in it. Another guide had his outboard motor quit on him while he was taking several American tourists on a trip. A third operator also learned his lesson as one of the air stations received a grimy but very eloquent note: "You make me big fish. Don't pinch. Not try it again."

John H. Spicer.



"Step out here!" snapped the
U-boat captain

A Question of Ammunition

Oddly ill-assorted was the armament of the freighter Southern Moon, and by no means adapted to defense against a U-boat; but Captain Noonan was armed with exasperation, a quick mind—and courage

By HAROLD BRADLEY SAY

HIS head was bald as the back of a tortoise and tanned as leather from shedding the frying rays of tropical suns. Wind, weather and years had wrinkled his face till it looked grandfatherly. And peacetime sailors had always known Captain John T. Noonan as a paternal, mild-mannered person.

Had the Southern Moon, this day in November, 1917, been manned by a crew who had sailed with him in days before the army transport service had taken charge of his destinies, to a man they would have decided that Captain Noonan had gone quite crazy.

All night long while the Southern Moon was slipping down the channel of the Delaware bound for Rio, the skipper had paced the bridge storming

aloud or mumbling to himself. Inwardly he raged with the heat of a blast furnace. First Mate Jenkins and others had sympathized with him. Quite righteous they deemed his indignation.

Bad enough to have the Government sticking an armed guard crew aboard—a lot of Navy fellows who were only a nuisance, in the way and forever making trouble. Why couldn't they stick this Lieutenant Henshaw and his Navy crew aboard a ship where they might be needed? The Southern Moon wouldn't come within a thousand miles of any submarines.

But exasperated as he had been with the assignment of Henshaw and his detachment, they were a trifling item of Captain Noonan's wrath.

In his right hand jammed down within his jumper pocket was the real cause of his raging. A piece of paper signed by the base transport commander.

You will accommodate Mr. Peralta in cabin quarters and he will mess with you and your officers. He will keep his snakes in his room that they may have every required attention. You will lend every assistance to make it comfortable for him and in arranging facilities for his reptiles.

Yours truly,

COLONEL E. M. HOWELL.

"A dried up greaser and a passel of slimy crawlers!" Captain Noonan snorted for the hundredth time. "Mister, can you imagine the like of it? I all but tossed that government health service lunatic over the side when he barges aboard with this Mexican experimenter."

"It's tough, captain," agreed the mate. "But then when you get to sea you're your own boss for three or four months. You can do like I said—throw the snakes over the side and the Mexican, too, if you want to."

"You can bet your license that the crawlers will go over the side. Can you imagine the United States Government fiddling around with a lot of snakes? Can you, I ask?"

The pilot couldn't.

Seafaring men are not ordinarily concerned with rattlesnakes and their kin. Neither the pilot nor Captain Noonan knew of or understood the Government's interest in a Brazil snake farm where newly discovered methods were being employed to produce antidotes for snake poison.

Captain Noonan only knew that his dignity, his position as a shipmaster, had been outraged beyond the last shred. He ordered to treat this desert

rat Peralta and his snakes like honored passengers! He harbored thoughts that had made one person in history a man without a country.

HE was still fuming when at daylight the Southern Moon dropped her pilot and left astern the lightship off the Delaware. A cold northerly wind was kicking up considerable of a sea when he dropped below for breakfast.

There were two tables in the dining saloon, one for the deck officers and one for the engineer crowd. Captain Noonan had directed the steward to place Lieutenant Henshaw at his table. Señor Peralta would eat with the engineers.

Without glancing, Captain Noonan knew that Peralta was at his seat. Not a sound from the engineers' table save the rattle of dishes. Mr. Zanello, the chief engineer, a dusky-skinned individual of Mediterranean ancestry and many superstitions, glowered upward at the skipper. So did others of the engine room delegation.

With evident and audible relish, Señor Peralta was consuming a stack of hot cakes and ham, apparently quite unaware of the silence his presence had created. Being sent to Coventry meant nothing to this wizened, desert-shriveled Mexican snake collector from the Southwest.

"Morning," greeted Captain Noonan.

A medley of muffled grunts from the engineers, a polite salutation from the Navy lieutenant, and a beaming greeting from Señor Peralta.

Captain Noonan planked himself down in his seat and mumbled "mush, ham and eggs" to the mess boy hovering over his table.

Silence thick and heavy settled over

the tables. The Navy officer tried vainly to break the ice. So conscious was he of his own unwelcome presence that it did not occur to him that Señor Peralta was the real concentrated essence of trouble. The lieutenant turned on his swivel dining chair and regarded the engineers' table. Mr. Peralta alone returned his gaze.

"What do you feed those snakes of yours?" queried Henshaw for want of other conversation.

"I breeng along two cages of mice," smiled the dark-skinned one. "They not eat much, rattlesnakes, don' need eat, but mice is always best."

Once the Navy man had broken the silence, others joined in. Not on the plane of camaraderie. They maintained their aloof disapproval.

"Ever get bit?" grunted Mr. Zanello, the chief, without taking his eyes from his plate.

"Onlee once. I see a snake's tail sticking out of a hole. I reach down to grab heem and snap hees head off. I do not see head sticking up other hole. *Pung!* He get me on the finger. See!" Señor Peralta held up a scrawny forefinger marked with a thin white scar. "That is where I cut to bleed eet. The bite made me very seek. I was luckee, for the rattler ees bad poison."

"How do you keep from getting bitten?" queried Captain Noonan from across the room.

Mr. Peralta smiled again. "Oh, now I know snakes so well. I understand how to handle heem. I never get bit. I pet them like kittens."

"Ugh!" grunted the second engineer, jumping up from his chair. "You be damn' sure you wash your hands before you come to this table then."

"Oh, sure," grinned Mr. Peralta unabashed. . . . "I have them all named.

One I call Julie. Eet is my favorite. Eet has three rattles and a button."

"HOW many you got?" put in Mr. Jenkins.

"Eighteen. I lose two on the baggage car coming from Tucson. *Carajo*, but the baggage man he was mad!"

Captain Noonan stiffened in his chair. "By thunder!" he exploded, "you better not lose any aboard this ship!" He waved a fork to emphasize his remark.

"No, no," hastily assured Señor Peralta. "Anyway, they are sleepy now with this cold weather. They do not try to get away."

"Yes?" rumbled Captain Noonan darkly. "Well, it'll be hot by tomorrow when we get into the Gulf Stream. You keep a dang sharp eye on them crawlers . . . You got anything with you for bites?"

"Ah, yes, the government people they send me three tubes of serum, with a leetle needle. But I lost two bottles. You know, I am most unlucky person. Always losing things."

"Well, you be damn' careful what you lose around here!" Inwardly, Captain Noonan determined that Peralta would lose eighteen rattlesnakes in the Atlantic, the first time he left them unguarded for ten minutes. The skipper rose from the table and started for the door.

"Captain, maybe you like to see my snakes?" Señor Peralta beamed ingratiatingly. "Come to my room and I will show them to you."

It wouldn't be a bad idea to get the lay of the land, Captain Noonan decided. "Sure, I might drop back later in the day."

The skipper went on up to the bridge.

The second mate was in the chart room just abaft the wheelhouse working out his sights. The helmsman looked out ahead over the vacant, white-capped seas. His eyes dropped back to the compass. Mechanically he edged the wheel to right or left.

Captain Noonan darted a glance astern. A smooth creaming line reached off straight across the waters until it was lost in the heaving distance. Good helmsman, this one. Lucky to have a sailor like Johnson. The skipper uttered an unspoken thanks to the fates that had endowed this particular sailor with what is known as "cock-eye." Otherwise the Navy would have had him. Johnson had quit the ship to enlist and came back quite dejected when the examiners turned him down.

The bow of the Southern Moon dipped slowly into a sharp-sloped valley of ocean. A flying mass of water volcanoed upward and out from both sides of her blunt nose as she smashed into the base of the next oncoming mountain of green. Upward she came with a climbing shrug. A mass of white rushed along her sides, creaming and crackling as it widened out.

The second mate stepped forward from the chart room. "Making our ten this morning, captain," he volunteered.

"Good," muttered the shipmaster, casting a baleful eye on a knot of white-capped figures on the gun platform aft. "What are our tourists up to, mister?"

The second observed that the captain's voice was less biting, less derisive than it had been the evening before when he referred to the naval detachment.

"Dunno, sir; the lieutenant said something about having practice this morning."

"Pretty soft for those lads. 'Join the Navy and see the world.' I guess the advertisement's right at that, eh, Wilson?"

"Yes, sir, but they sure take themselves seriously. They're looking for a submarine any time."

The captain snorted. "Submarines nothing! They'd have a better chance finding one up the Mississippi."

COMMOTION around the gun platform and a burst of excited babble and profanity stayed the second's reply.

Henshaw bounded down from the gun platform and came charging forward. He shot up the bridge ladder. "Captain! Captain!" His eyes were wide; consternation leaped from his face.

"What's wrong, man? Speak!" Captain Noonan was genuinely alarmed.

"Turn around! We've got to go back!"

"What?" roared the uncomprehending master.

"The ammunition!" cried Henshaw. "It's oversize. We can't use it in the gun!"

For a matter of seconds the captain's face retained its startled look. It vanished in an explosive, joyous roar.

"The devil you say! Three cheers for the Navy!" cried the skipper in malicious delight. He sailed his cap into the corner of the bridge wing. He patted the top of his bald, glistening scalp. "Lieutenant, what a joke on the Navy! Holy jumped-up jackasses!"

He was repaid for all the annoying, all the harassing, all the indignities that he had suffered.

"But, captain!" shouted the distraught officer. "The gun's useless! We can't fire it! I tell you, sir, this is

no joke! You'll go back to Philadelphia or put into Hampton Roads?"

"Guess again, lieutenant!"

Captain Noonan harbored no personal hate toward Henshaw, but the Navy man represented an outward and visible symbol of all that had set about to circumscribe the merchant marine captain's right to rule his floating realm in his own free way. He pointed to the shining telegraph and its brightly polished letter set at "full ahead."

"Lieutenant, that telegraph isn't going to ring till we make pilotage off Rio de Janeiro. Hard luck about your shells." The captain grinned. "Maybe you can file 'em down."

"Very well, sir." The officer had recovered his composure. Coldly he looked the shipmaster in the face. He glanced toward the second mate and helmsman, who had been interested listeners. "These two men are witnesses to my protest. I wash my hands of any responsibility in any trouble that arises from my inability to fire."

"That's agreed, lieutenant," chorled Captain Noonan. "Agreed in full."

Indignation oozing from every pore, the Navy officer dropped down the ladder and stalked aft. Curtly he directed the gun crew to make fast the tarpaulin covering over the breech and to drive home the muzzle plug. That accomplished, the crew went to their quarters or idled about on deck mumbling and muttering their opinions of merchant ship captains.

CAPTAIN NOONAN glanced out over the heaving world of slaty green. His soul soared with a flock of gulls that wheeled along above the ship. Audibly he hummed. He was still humming when he dropped aft from the deck officers' housing to the

section abaft the galley where dwelt the engineers.

He sauntered down the alleyway. In front of the third's closed door he halted. The door on the other side of the narrow alley was open. This was the den of Señor Peralta and his eighteen rattlesnakes. There was no sound from within save a plaintive squeaking and faint scratching of mice that came from a large tin-lined box with a perforated cover. The box rested on the settee across the after end of the room. Under it reposed three wicker-like baskets.

Gingerly the captain tapped his foot against one of the wicker baskets beneath the settee. No sound. He drove his toe against it more boldly, jamming the basket against the bulkhead.

B-r-r—rr-fit! A vibrant, electric whirring. A sound that will petrify one who never before has heard it—the deadly warning of a rattlesnake. Involuntarily, Captain Noonan jumped. He bumped against a bracketed washstand. A glass shaving mug and some other articles clattered from the mirror frame above it. Hastily he gathered them up. A little pasteboard box, or rather the lettering on it, caught his eye:

SNAKEBITE SERUM (FAMILY CROTALIDAE)

Directions

He read no further, but jammed the little box into his pocket. "Ugh!" he grunted, and fairly shot from the room. The displeasure of the first rattler had roused not only his companions in one basket but those in the other two wicker containers. The room buzzed and whirled with their serpentine anger.

Captain Noonan hastened up the alley out to the open deck. He observed that Señor Peralta stood alone leaning

over the starboard rail gazing down into the creaming sea sweeping aft along the wall of the ship. He went to his room, closed the door behind him and pulled the pilfered package from his pocket. He took from it a tube and little hypodermic needle. The directions announced that the tube contained sufficient serum for two subcutaneous administrations.

He stepped across the cabin to his bookcase and pulled out a fat dust-coated volume on the history of ships. He slipped the tube and needle back on the shelf and shoved the book in its place. If one of those crawlers got loose and bit him or some one else before he had a chance to chuck them overboard, the serum would be where he could find it quick. If Señor Peralta got bit—well, he ought to be immune.

TWO evenings later, the steamer was down in warm zephyr-kissed waters off the West Indies where a man is comfortable with clothes or without. A pair of ex-college men who had shipped in the crew decided it was time to entertain their shipmates with their saxophones. Expectant and more or less skeptical, others of the crew gathered on the hatchtop of the after well deck.

The collegiate oiler raised his instrument for a trial blast. A blatant wail rang out across the waves.

"What the hell!" Captain Noonan jerked an after supper pipe from his mouth and whirled around on the bridge.

The first mate grinned. "That's one of them college pimboes with a horn."

"Gosh a'mighty! I thought it was another ship bearin' down on us!"

The assemblage on the hatchtop was invisible from the bridge on account of the intervening deck structure. Came

another preliminary saxophonic wail. Ere it died away, the dusk was cleft with the shriek of a man—a scream of terror stark and ghastly. It ended in a wild medley of other screams and shouts.

"Now what?" In two bounds, the captain shot down the ladder to his cabin deck, then on to the deck below. Despite his years, he could move like an athlete. He streaked aft through the midship house alley. As he started flying down the ladder to the well deck aft, he beheld a man laid out on the hatchtop. A knot of shouting, yelling men were swinging sticks and broom-handles at something along the starboard rail.

"Throw it over! Throw it over! That's it!"

The captain leaped over a silver-finished saxophone lying on the deck. He jumped to the side of the man lying stretched out on the hatchtop.

"What's the matter here?" thundered the skipper. "Who hit him?"

"Nobody!" cried the bo's'n, charging back from the rail. "He fainted." The bo's'n shouted to some one to hurry up with the water.

"*Fainted?*" exploded Captain Noonan.

"Yes," explained the excited bo's'n. "He went to play and a rattlesnake crawled out of his horn."

"Did it bite him?" jerked the shipmaster.

"No. We killed the devil and heaved it over the side. Gosh, sir, it was a whopper!"

Captain Noonan lingered only until the oiler came back to life moaning and trembling. He bounded back up the ladder. A figure stood at the top. The master pounced on it like a terrier on a rat. Sulphur and vitriol slashed the air.

"But they didn't need to keel heem," whined Señor Peralta. "Why didn't they call me?"

"Call you!" roared the captain. "I've a good mind to throw you overboard. Why didn't you tell me your damn' snake was loose?"

"I was afraid you would not like eet, captain. He got away some time yesterday. What a fonny place for heem to hide."

Boiling with rage, Captain Noonan regarded the Mexican. Damn it, let the Government do its worst. He'd throw those snakes overboard then and there. He moved toward the alley entranceway.

"Captain Noonan."

The captain half turned to face the wireless man who had dropped down from his cage above.

"Sparks? Now what?"

"Message for you from the Arlington station."

The skipper got under a light and read:

MAINTAIN EXTRA CAUTION
YOUR COURSE BETWEEN
TWENTY-FIVE AND FIFTEEN
NORTH. ENEMY SUBMARINE
REPORTED.

The captain shrugged.

"Don't mean anything. Maybe some one saw a sub. More likely he didn't. They've been sending me trash like that the last four voyages."

The interruption sufficed to turn his wrath toward another subject than rattlesnakes.

"You keep that damn' door shut after this when you're not in there with those snakes," he snapped at Peralta. Inwardly he berated himself for not having tossed the three crates of reptiles over the side the first night out. He promised himself that they

would not be aboard another twenty-four hours.

CIRCUMSTANCES were to intervene. It was during breakfast next morning that the steamer's whistle blared out in a series of quick, nervous blasts.

Knives and forks clattered to the table. A cup crashed on the cement-covered saloon deck. Feet shuffled wildly and chairs banged on their swivels. All sprang for the nearest exit. Fire gongs clanged throughout the ship.

"Submarine! Submarine!"

The shout came from the excited third mate, Campbell, on the bridge.

Oilers, deck personnel off watch, and the blue-uniformed Navy men raced from their quarters fore and aft. They charged to the port rail waving their arms and shouting.

Captain Noonan went up ladders like a bounding chamois. On his heels charged Lieutenant Henshaw.

"There! There! See?" Mr. Campbell pointed out across the deep blue heaving world of ocean.

With naked eye the captain saw it. Just a bluish object and a little patch of white barely discernible in the blinding dazzle of the sun.

"Maybe it's a whale." Outwardly calm, the captain's face as he squinted into the sun, but those on the bridge caught the alarm in the veteran skipper's voice. "The glasses, Campbell!"

Lieutenant Henshaw's glasses were already on the sinister speck and its surrounding patch of white.

"If it's a whale, captain," he rasped grimly, "he's got a gun on his back."

Even as he spoke, there came a flash, more felt than seen, like a sheet of distant lightning at midday.

"By thunder!" cried Captain Noon-

an, "it is a sub!" As one hypnotized, he stared through his glasses.

Out of the air came a howling rising shriek. With the swish and roar of a dozen elevated trains it rushed over the Southern Moon.

With startling abruptness a great column of water shot upward two hundred yards to the starboard side.

The Navy officer regarded it with practiced eye. "Five inch!" he ejaculated. "He'll be on us with the next two."

Another distant flash. Seconds later a dull boom, then the rising wail.

A second column of ocean jumped skyward, then descended in a boiling mass of white not a hundred yards off to port.

Stupefied, stunned, too bewildered to speak or move, Captain Noonan stared at the ugly fountain. An overwhelming fear surged over him. A cold hand clutched his heart. He who had laughed at the idea of a submarine. He who had scorned the Navy's warning. He who had sneered at the Navy's armed guard. He who had gloated on the torment of those who would have aided him. He, a colossal, stubborn fool, was caught stark and helpless in a trap that he himself had set.

Another sinister flash; another siren's shriek. A blinding roaring flare. With a stunning suck of air the whole forward section of the steamer was enveloped in flame. Smoke, thick and acrid drifted across the fore well deck upward to the bridge. Where the fore-castle head had been was a gaping, jagged mass of twisted steel, strewn with torn blankets, garments of various colors and innumerable other unwarlike articles.

Two figures lay in the port scuppers. One was a grotesque, shapeless heap.

The other was twisting about and crying out. Two men in naval uniform and two others of the ship's crew rushed out from the shelter of the boat deck housing. Quickly they picked up the wounded man and hurried back to shelter.

DISTRAUGHT, frenzied, Captain Noonan whirled on Lieutenant Henshaw.

"Man!" he cried, clutching at the Navy officer's arm. "Can't you do something? Can't you shoot at all?"

Grimly the lieutenant shook his head.

"Not a thing, captain. Not a thing but curse him. I warned you. It's run or surrender. He wants supplies or he'd have torpedoed, if he's not out of torpedoes."

The captain jumped to the wheel house.

"Hard-a-port!" he shouted. "Hard-a-port! I'm going to run for it." A white-faced helmsman twirled the wheel.

The Southern Moon was swinging now. Slowly she came around to point her stern at the German. The maneuver cut down the German's target to about an eighth of what it had been broadside.

Two more shells ripped by, one a hundred yards to port and the other slightly closer. The third screamed close in to starboard and sent up a fountain of ocean. Part of the massive column cascaded down on the fore well deck of the steamer.

Henshaw calmly observed the submarine.

"He's coming head on and fast, captain. He's one of their fourteen knot boats, I think; you'll never get away."

Another shell ripped across the water. Just over the Southern Moon it

went and plunged into the sea dead ahead of the steamer's nose.

"Little lower and that one'd ruined us," remarked the lieutenant.

Captain Noonan had conquered his outward consternation. His was the calm of one who knows the worst has happened and, resigned to fate, carries on to the end.

"Lieutenant," he requested, "will you get Sparks to send out a broadcast? Tell 'em we're being shelled. Position twenty-four ten north, fifty-three thirty-five west. Our new course is one ninety-seven true."

The Navy officer was halfway down the ladder. He shot across the deck and up the ladder to the wireless room located over the after midship housing.

The tell-tale on the bridge ticked faster. A heavy cloud of smoke rolled from the funnel and trailed off astern. A sharper vibration traveled through the vessel's structure. Mr. Zanello had forced his engines far beyond their normal maximum. The Southern Moon was logging nearly thirteen knots.

The submarine had stopped shelling.

"Maybe he's out of ammunition," suggested Mr. Campbell, trying to hide the tremble in his voice.

"And maybe he isn't," muttered the skipper, keeping his glasses glued on the German. "There's men around the gun. He's smoking a lot—pushing his Diesels." The captain hesitated, then lowered his glass. "And—damnation! He's gaining!"

Henshaw darted forward from the wireless room to the bridge.

"Sparks raised the British cruiser Castledale." The Navy man spoke with a grim calmness. "But he's three hours away."

"The sub's gaining on us," groaned

Noonan. "He'll be abeam before then."

"Yes," agreed Henshaw, "and likely'll turn a Maxim on us if he doesn't cut loose with his gun pretty quick. He's scarce two miles away."

"Do you think he's out of shells?" suggested Captain Noonan.

"No," answered the Navy officer. "But he doesn't want to waste any more. When he lets go again he can't miss."

PLAINLY now those on the bridge and the men scattered about the decks of the Southern Moon could see the submarine. With naked eye they caught the movements on the fore deck of the U-boat.

Up on the conning tower a pair of colored flags slashed through the air.

"Moxley!" shouted Henshaw to his signal man. "Up here on the bridge. Quick!"

The sailor scooted up the ladder.

"Take the glasses. Read him!" directed Henshaw.

The signal man fastened his eyes on the slashing flags.

"He says," slowly translated Moxley, "'Stop at once and I assure no harm. Otherwise suffer the consequences!'"

"Well?" Henshaw regarded the shipmaster questioningly and without emotion.

"Maybe he's bluffing," rasped Captain Noonan from tense-set jaws.

"Maybe," agreed Henshaw grimly. "If you're not going to stop I'll have my men get out their carbines. He'll be cutting loose with a Maxim and rifles any time—if he doesn't blow us out of the water with a gun or a torpedo."

"Go ahead!" snapped the skipper. "Get your guns." He turned to shout down to a messboy on the deck.

"Williams! Bring up my Winchester and a box of shells!"

"The old man's got nerve!" ejaculated Henshaw as he dashed down to get his sailors under arms.

But the German had no intention of closing up to rifle range until he was certain that the Southern Moon had capitulated.

A lance of fire vomited from the sub's gun. An instant later the poop deck of the Southern Moon flew into a thousand splintered pieces. With it went the steering engine. Though the shell had struck high above the water-line, an explosive freak had snapped the propeller shaft. The Southern Moon's flight was abruptly ended. A cloud of white spouted from the steam pipe, while a frenzied engineer twirled down the throttle valve to stop the racing engine.

Captain Noonan debated no longer. He darted into the chart house and came out with a white signal flag. Frenziedly he waved it.

"Have your men throw down their guns," he shouted to Henshaw, down on deck.

The Navy officer had anticipated the shipmaster's command. He, too, knew the jig was up; that it would be suicide to resist.

The submarine circled off and came quartering in toward the freighter, which was rolling in the swell and barely sliding ahead.

A knot of German sailors clustered around the sub's gun ready to jerk the lanyard at the first sign of trickery. Three other sailors were cramped together on the conning tower bridge ready to sweep the Southern Moon with machine gun fire.

The sub pushed up closer. A tall person on the conning tower bridge raised a megaphone.

"Form your men on your after well deck in two ranks!" The command, in perfect English, floated across the water. "Launch a boat. Bring your papers to me. Man your boat with your mates, your chief engineer and your Naval officer."

Every ear had heard the command. Without waiting for orders, the ship's crew congregated on the designated spot. There was little talking. Apprehensively eyes stared across at the undersea monster. Nervously men glanced toward one another. They spoke with bated breath, in undertones and whispers.

"All here?" queried Captain Noonan in a strained, hoarse voice.

"All but the Greek and Mitchell," volunteered a much agitated steward. "Nick was killed and Mitchell's lying on the saloon settee all shot up."

The mates, chief engineer and Henshaw had already started forward toward No. 1 boat.

CAPTAIN NOONAN addressed his assembled crew and the enlisted men of the armed guard.

"Stand in your tracks for orders, men—unless he starts shooting. If he does, it's every man for himself." The captain singled out the grizzled old chief gunner's mate of the armed guard. "You'll take charge while I'm gone."

"Very well, sir," rasped the old-time Navy man with a calmness that lifted some of the fear from more timid souls.

No. 1 boat, its prow headed for the U-boat, lurched and dived across the glassy blue ocean swells. Merchant ship crews have little time for rowing practice. Generally speaking this art among merchant crews vanished with the sailing ship and the advent of motor

launches. Moreover, nerves were a bit on edge.

Descending blades missed their strokes. Frequently they pulled against air instead of water. There was considerable splashing and no little clashing of oars. Men grunted and cursed fervently.

In the sternsheets, but half conscious of happenings in the immediate world about him, Captain Noonan steered the boat mechanically. Bewildered eyes looked out from his wrinkled, sun-tanned face. Their gaze traveled over the moving heads and bending shoulders of his oarsmen to the low-lying submarine with its dripping sides glistening in the sun.

It took in the long wicked gun with its half naked crew hovering around the breech and others scattered about the deck and conning tower bridge with rifles and pistols in their hands. Then it shifted back over his shoulder to the Southern Moon wallowing in the easy swell.

"Here, captain!" directed a voice, curt and commanding.

A tall person in an imperial naval officer's uniform was pointing to a spot below the narrow deck just abaft the gun. Seconds later the boat grated against the side of the underwater monster. The tall person snapped out instructions viciously. Two sailors reached down with a boat hook and held the lifeboat against the submarine. A short line was tossed down the side into the boat from the Southern Moon.

"Come aboard!" snapped the tall one, a sharp-featured Prussian. He regarded the Americans with a half contemptuous, half triumphant smile. He spotted Lieutenant Henshaw at once.

"Regular Navy officer—eh?" gibed he. "So! Rather expected you would

return our compliments with your guns. It is dull, this one-sided business."

Lieutenant Henshaw's face was set. Silently and impassively he faced the submarine commander.

"Why didn't you fire?" The question came sharp and cold. The German was still suspicious. "Answer, you insolent upstart."

"I could refuse," stated Henshaw, quietly defiant, "and would, if there were any use. It happens that our ammunition is oversize. Otherwise, I would not be your prisoner—certainly not this soon."

"So?" grinned the sub's captain tauntingly. "Don't be too loud with your declaration of independence, lieutenant. The sharks in these waters are always hungry."

In his own tongue, the officer barked out orders to his second in command and to others above deck. Seconds later, German hands darted through clothing and pockets of Captain Noonan, his officers and Lieutenant Henshaw. They discovered no weapons. Next the submarine commander made a quick perusal of the Southern Moon's papers.

"I BELIEVE you have some sugar and canned goods?" resumed the sub commander. "We're out of many supplies. That's the only reason we stopped you before torpedoing. We'll open you up and sink you afterward." He hesitated to fasten a colder eye on Captain Noonan. "You were foolish and insolently defiant not to stop at once," he went on. "You thought I was bluffing when I ordered you to stop or be shelled. I warn you, I may decide to shell your boats after we sink your ship."

The face of the veteran captain went

ashy white. In his eyes there flashed a stricken light.

"You won't do that, sir!" With a beseeching gesture he flung out his trembling hands.

"Won't I?" leered the exasperated U-boat commander. "War is not play; you merchant ships must be taught that we mean business."

"Don't murder my men," pleaded Captain Noonan frantically. "I was in command. I'll take the responsibility. Kill me, if you must, but not my men!"

"Shut your wrinkled mug!" snarled the officer with sudden savageness. "Back into your boat! You're going back to unlock your safe and help get out supplies."

With that the U-boat's commander directed that the others from the Southern Moon be kept under guard on the forward deck. His second in command already had a crew down in the Southern Moon's boat. They were armed with rifles and pistols.

Captain Noonan clambered down into the boat. The sub's commander followed with a Luger in his hand. Just as he settled himself in the fore end, the German called up to his second.

"Keep these men here," he directed. "If there should be shots on the steamer, shoot these men down at once." He pointed toward the little knot of Americans on the fore deck of the submarine. He turned toward Captain Noonan.

"Hostages are excellent protection, captain," he grinned evilly.

The distracted, helpless skipper made no answer.

With growing dread the ship's complement and the more stoical Navy men regarded the German-manned lifeboat rapidly nearing the Southern Moon. The oars bit into the water with long even strokes. The backs of

the rowers bent forward and back with a machine-like rhythm. An efficient, formidable lot appeared that boat crew with their weapons ranged along the gunwales.

Anticipating the call for it, the chief gunner's mate had dropped a Jacob's ladder over the side of the Southern Moon.

Feet shuffled uneasily, and there was a nervous coughing and clearing of throats as the Germans poured up over the side, their commander first.

With the impersonal eye of a hard-boiled prison warden looking over a collection of convicts, the U-boat captain surveyed the luckless crew. For two days the ship had been in semi-tropical latitudes and the men were lightly dressed. Aside from the hapless armed guard, few wore more than light underclothes, trousers or dungarees and slippers or shoes. The men fresh from the fire and engine rooms were besmirched with dirt and oil.

THE German regarded the hapless array and chuckled.

His eyes traveled up and down the double ranks of men. Abruptly they stopped to rest on a sun-wizened, shriveled, beady-eyed person wearing a broad-brimmed, high-crowned hat foreign to men who go down to the sea in ships. The target of the German's puzzled stare also wore a pair of dirty khaki breeches and a loose, bulging jerkin of the same material which obviously hid some bulky object.

"Step out here!" snapped the captain of the U-boat. "Jump!"

As one hypnotized, the frightened Señor Peralta shuffled forward.

"Up with your hands!"

In that instant, the little man from Arizona divined the German's intent.

"No! Don't do that!" he shrilled

as the officer's hand darted toward the well-filled pocket in his jerkin.

"Shut up!" lashed the sub commander. His hand dived into Señor Peralta's jerkin.

Inside the coat there was a small convulsion like the lusty wiggling of a fresh caught trout. With it came a quick snap and a muffled whir. The assured and haughty confidence vanished from the Prussian's face. Dismay; then terror, stark and paralyzing, leapt into his eyes.

Wildly he jerked his hand from Peralta's jerkin. From it there dangled thirty inches of mottled, writhing rattlesnake. Its fangs were sunk deep in the German's wrist.

The horror-stricken sub commander let forth an inarticulate gasp of utter horror. Wildly he shook his arm. The snake thudded to the deck. Even as it lit, the angered rattler coiled itself with lightning movement. Outward it shot with the speed of a bullet. The deadly fangs ripped through cloth into the calf of the German boatswain.

The deck became a milling, shouting mass of men. A gun butt smashed the back of the snake. Some one caught it with a broom and the twisting reptile splashed into the ocean.

Now the rattlesnake is foreign to Northern Europe, but instinct would tell even an Eskimo that the reptile is death. The submarine commander, gripping his scratched and bleeding hand and staring at it transfixed, knew what had bitten him. So did the unhappy sailor wildly yanking up his trouser leg.

"*Mein Gott!*" howled the sub commander, "I am bitten. Help me. *Ach, Gott!*"

It was Señor Peralta who recovered his senses first.

"No, you won't die," he cried.

"Julie sees only a young snake and I've got a serum for the bite."

Frantically the German clutched Mr. Peralta.

"Hurry! *Mach schnell!* Quick!" he shrieked.

The bitten sailor only moaned and muttered prayers.

Señor Peralta darted to his room. He came back looking dejected and frightened.

"Eet is lost. Gone," he explained. "I am ver' sorry."

The German whipped out his pistol. "Quick! Find it!" he yelled.

Captain Noonan stepped up to the German officer. His wrinkled face was resolute and grim.

"Listen," said he bluntly. "I've got the serum! Just one tube of it and it's damn' well hidden. Surrender yourself and ship to me and you get it. Otherwise, nature can take its course."

"I'll shoot you if you don't get it!" snarled the U-boat commander, pointing his Luger.

"You said," retorted Captain Noonan with grim jaw set, "that you would probably shell us anyway. So do your damndest. If you kill me now or touch one of my men, you'll turn black and die like a poisoned pup. It's up to you."

The German jabbed his Luger against Captain Noonan's conspicuous stomach.

"Damn you!" he shrilled. "Get that serum or I blow you open."

CAPTAIN NOONAN was staking his life on a monstrous gamble.

He did not know whether the arrogant Prussian really had meant to carry out his threat of shelling the boats; nor could he be sure how dearly the U-boat officer loved life.

"Blow and be damned! You die,

too." Defiantly he spat the words, "Surrender, and you live."

The hand that held the Luger trembled. A consuming terror closed tighter around the man's heart. Slowly the arm and pistol dropped. The stricken look of a man who sees death in a peculiarly horrible form reaching out for him flared in the Prussian's eyes. His men and guns were powerless to aid. Surrender to the merchant captain—that alone could save him, and precious moments were already lost.

The commander of the U-boat dallied no longer. He flipped his weapon and thrust the butt toward Captain Noonan.

"Take it!" he cried. "I surrender! I surrender all! Save me! *Lieber Herr Gott*, I feel the poison now."

He clutched at his heart. His eyes distended wildly. The muscles of his face moved with a spasmodic twitching.

Dumbly the German sailors on deck regarded their two stricken officers.

"Turn your arms to them," the commander fairly shrieked in German. He pointed to the Americans.

Captain Noonan was unhurried. He picked up a megaphone lying on the hatchtop. "Now tell your crowd aboard the sub to come alongside. You'd better tell 'em to hurry, too."

Frantically, the German shouted directions across the water. It was an eternity to him before what had been his ship slid alongside. He cursed and cried and flung his arms in an agony of fear.

"Keep your shirt on," rasped Captain Noonan. "Tell your men to turn over their rifles and that machine gun to our men on the submarine."

Stupefied, the Germans on the sub's deck stared at their commander.

"Quick!" he rasped at them. From his voice and face, they knew it was

no time to hesitate. The disciplined men stolidly obeyed their commander's orders.

The skipper gave instructions for guarding the Germans already on deck.

"Come with me," he flung at the U-boat captain. "And bring the other victim."

Seconds later Captain Noonan was reaching behind a book in his cabin. He tore open the little box and jerked the cork from the serum bottle. He filled the "gun," then jabbed it into the lieutenant's arm.

The German boatswain was babbling and moaning.

"Lay off. You're next." Firmly he shot the other charge into the bitten one's calf.

"There!" ejaculated the skipper. "You'll be good as new if the directions tell the truth."

DAYLIGHT was nearly gone. The sun was sinking into the ocean like a sizzling ball of flame. A warm breeze caressed the darkening world of heaving blue. All nature was at rest.

Captain Noonan batted a cinder from the top of his head. Meditatively he regarded the heavy towing line that ran from the bow of the Southern Moon to the stern of the cruiser Castledale. He glanced out to starboard where a long, low craft with a hump on its back cut a white streak in the ocean.

He turned to another standing quietly at his side.

"Can you beat it, lieutenant?" he reiterated. "Can you beat that desert wart's packing off a snake in his coat? Trying to save his pet even at such a time as this."

"Can't even tie it," returned Lieutenant Henshaw, squinting across to-

ward the submarine, now operated under a guard from the Castledale. "But it came in rather handy."

"Yes, lieutenant, it did. But believe me—he won't pack any more around. He's too dang careless. Between ourselves, I heaved the whole caboodle overboard about an hour ago."

"Well," smiled Henshaw, "you haven't made me feel bad."

Captain Noonan filled an after supper pipe. He ducked down below the "dodger" to strike a match. He sucked the charge to a cheerful glow.

"Lieutenant, do you reckon we can get hold of some right-sized shells at St. Thomas or San Juan?"

"Captain, if we can't, we'll file a few down. Or," Henshaw grinned, "we'll get guns to fit them."

THE END.



When Black Was White

TRAVELERS visiting the tropics the first time are often alarmed by the sight of white blotches on dark-skinned men and women. "Leprosy!" They shudder and refrain from purchasing fruit or other articles presided over by persons so marked. But the disease is harmless, and non-contagious. In the Philippines it is called *anun* and in the French West Indies *lotá*.

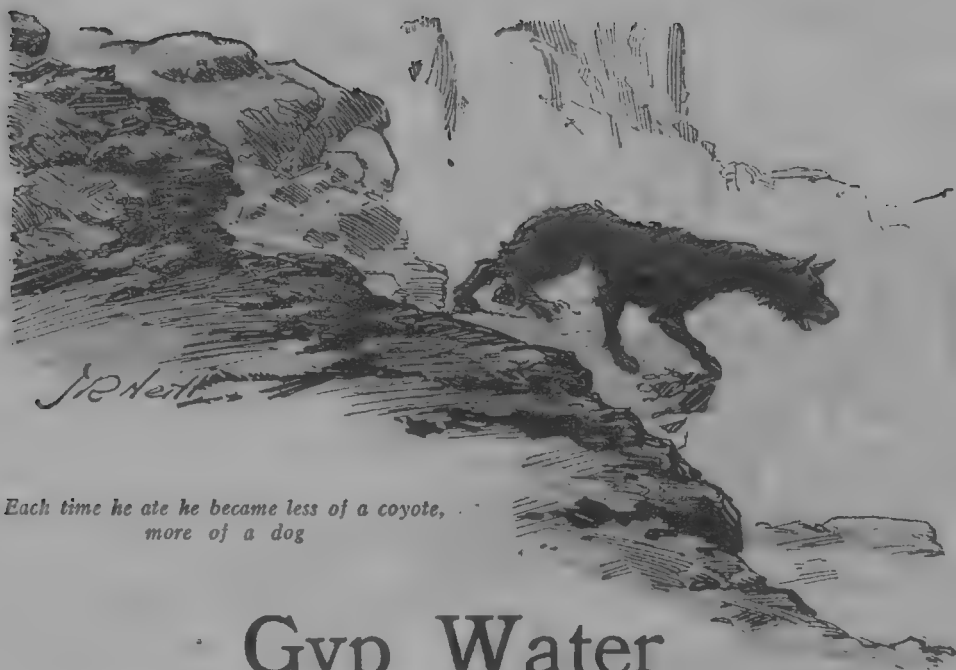
Back in 1907 a negro named Roger Poisat murdered a man in Guadeloupe and managed to escape. His description was spread abroad by the French authorities as being "extremely black, and marked with *lotá* spots on the hands and face." But Poisat evaded capture. Years later a letter picked up in the street in Guadeloupe indicated that the murderer was alive, and residing in French Guiana. The man had been unable to refrain from communicating with his aged mother.

Again the description of Poisat was sent out, and the officials of Cayenne resumed the search for the black man who had adopted the name of Jean Poiret. But the Jean Poiret whom they located, and sighted only at a distance, was apparently no negro. In fact, he was extremely white. Finally it was decided to arrest the man anyhow and subject him to questioning, for the original Poisat was said to have sharp aquiline features and thin lips such as are the heritage of a dash of Arabian blood.

The alleged murderer protested vehemently, but was taken to the *commissaire de police* and there examined by both detectives and doctors. On his back and thighs were a few patches of black skin, but otherwise he was white-skinned. The *lotá*, unchecked by medical treatment, had almost covered his entire body. To date, however, Roger Poisat has not been brought to trial. A week after his arrest the murderer managed to escape again, and is believed to be living among the Indians of the back country.

In practically all tropical countries a cure for the white spots exists, but usually little attention is paid to them. In the French West Indies the remedy is a mixture of salicylic and vinegar rubbed on the spots. In the Philippines a medicinal leaf is locally applied. Both remedies require long usage to effect a cure.

C. A. Freeman.



*Each time he ate he became less of a coyote,
more of a dog*

Gyp Water

*Canteens full of gold and bodies full of burning thirst, three desert
wayfarers found that not all coyotes have four legs*

By KENNETH PERKINS

Author of "On the Wing," "Voodoo'd," etc.

Novelette—Complete

CHAPTER I.

A LONESOME COYOTE.

DON KI-YI lifted his gaunt head and emitted a series of hysterical howls and barks. It was not the bark of a dog nor the howl of a wolf. It was the unmistakable lamentation of a coyote.

Don Ki-Yi was mourning his dead mate.

A coyote mates for life. For years these two had fought the fight of pariahs together. Traps were laid for them; hunks of poisoned beef were put out for them to eat; ranch dogs chased them from can heaps; men shot

at them. And through it all Don Ki-Yi's uncanny wisdom had saved his mate from death. But finally their adopted land, the old devil Desert, had claimed her.

It was hot. The starvation and thirst that had taken his mate from him began to work upon Don Ki-Yi himself. He left that shapeless bundle of bones and sun-scorched hair which was all that was left of his life's mate, and headed off at a spiritless slouch into a rockbound cañon. The sun had driven out all life. Even the cactus trees were like gaunt skeletons of things long since burned to death.

The desert Ishmaelite kept on, head-

ing into the higher mesas in search of quail. Up here the mesquite was coated with alkali, so that it seemed a part of the sandstone and granite. No sign of quail or cactus-wren or road

other coyotes, the soft nose of a dead cow—all these were remote and torturing memories.

There was yet one chance. In his strange instinctive knowledge of all the draws and barrancas of those bad lands, Don Ki-Yi remembered a water



runner. There had been plenty here a few months before when cactus blossoms bloomed—the green of the palo verde, the red of ocotillo, or the white stars of saguaro. Now it was like a scene in a strange planet that might have been dead for countless cons.

He crossed a divide, headed into a gulch where once he had found some meager scraps of food near the shack of a Papago renegade. But the renegade had been driven out by the desert sun long since. No chance now for the luscious meat left in a tin can. The food of man, the remainder of a wolf's kill, the buried carrion of

hole he had found years before. There would be tules around the water hole. A blacksnake or trade rat would be there somewhere in the growth that fringed the pool. Perhaps he could scare up a chuckwalla.

He found the hole in a gulch halfway up a giant mesa of granite. But as his sun-faded eyes peered into its depths he saw merely a succession of white contours which marked the periods of evaporation. The tules had long since dried and burned under the sun. Sand waves had buried the stunted mesquite.

It was then that a very peculiar thing happened to Don Ki-Yi. Per-

haps the explanation lay in the fact that he was half dog. But that, after all, should not be considered, since most of the coyotes that infest the desert towns and cow camps of the West are half ranch dogs. But no one ever thinks of them as half-breeds—they are coyotes. And now the part of Don Ki-Yi's make-up which was dog welled up for the first time in his life.

Until this moment he had never responded to any instinct within him except the instinct of the coyote. He hunted alone and at night; he stole baby pigs out of a sty; he followed the trail of the wolf in order to feast on its leavings; he ate rotten melons and carrion; he sang dolefully before sunrise with a *yip-yip* and a bark and a howl; and in none of these habits did he show that he was half dog.

But now the desert had brought out another part of his real nature. Don Ki-Yi felt a strange and inexplicable longing which proved that his dog inheritance was calling to him: *he wanted the companionship of man.*

HE knew it when he saw, far down at the base of the red cliffs, a few black specks which he immediately recognized as an outfit of prospectors: a burro, a horse, and three human beings.

He skulked down a boulder wash toward them, not as a thief and a coyote, but as a dog. Just the same, he skulked. For outwardly he was still the Ishmael of the desert; scrawny of body, wiry of sinews, a dry, dusty, sandy-colored critter with a coat of sun-scorched hair; yellow-eyed, furtive, pausing at times so that he was completely invisible against the background of sandy cliff.

From a vantage point farther down he watched the outfit on the plain.

According to his wisdom in the ways of human beings, those three down there were peculiar. He studied them a long time, the yellow flames in his eyes burning perplexedly. Two of them wore skirts and had long hair, hence they were less to be feared, for they were the sort of human beings who always ran into a ranch house when they saw him and told another kind of human who would come out with a gun. The third was the one with a gun.

Don Ki-Yi flattened on his belly, his lean neck stretched downward and his head snuggled on his paws, which were stretched over the edge of his rock. He was a part of the rock himself, carved in the shape of a gaunt predatory beast. Not much dog, you would say, in that picture.

And yet Don Ki-Yi longed to go down farther and get to the lee of that outfit so that he could breathe one whiff of living flesh. He would not harm them. If they knew anything about coyotes, they ought to realize that a coyote never attacked a man. Don Ki-Yi would not even steal from them. Yes, he was hungry, but above his hunger there was his loneliness. And his loneliness was even greater than his thirst.

Thirst? There was the key to that whole incomprehensible drama which he was watching. Those human beings down there were going mad with thirst. They were staggering around, howling, snatching at each other's canteens, sinking to their knees, gibbering, laughing, waving crazily to the sky.

Besides this, Don Ki-Yi noticed that they were too weak to hold the canteens which they snatched from each other. And this meant that they were very weak indeed, for obviously the

canteens held no water—otherwise they would drink from them and slake their madness.

Don Ki-Yi was greatly impressed. As he crouched on his rock watching those hapless mortals, he was like the Jamajam Indians who watched from cliff tops as some unlucky band of pioneers was caught in the desert plain below—watched and waited while their victims succumbed to thirst, before making the raid.

Finally Don Ki-Yi skulked down another mile or so toward them. They would be dying soon.

But even now he went not as a predatory beast toward the promise of carrion, but as a dog drawn by an immemorial instinct toward the haunt of his god, which is man.

CHAPTER II.

THREE MADMEN.

THE three mortals whom Don Ki-Yi had chosen as his gods were certainly a queer-looking trio. But then a dog, much less a coyote, is no finicky appraiser of looks. They were ragged, sunburned, torn by mesquite thorn and desert rock.

One was a ponderous barrel of a squaw with a face as brown and wrinkled as a lizard's, shreds of a Mother Hubbard gown about her shapeless figure and a tattered Mexican shawl about her ox-like shoulders.

Another was a slim but powerful youth with a finely chiseled, sun-scorched face, with handsome and glittering eyes which, despite his weeks of trailing through white alkali under a desert sun, were still as keen as a buzzard's.

The third was a frail girl, clothed in ragged khaki, with hair faded by

the fierce heat, face deeply tanned, blue eyes beginning to show the devastation of that country which prospector and *lobo* and rattler alike had forsaken.

Although the appearance of this trio did not impress Don Ki-Yi one way or another, he could not help noticing the peculiarity of their actions. The man was shouting: "It's all over! We've won! We own the world!"

He threw his arm about the slender shoulders of the girl, slapped the squaw on her massive back. "You get it, Mapimi? We own the world, I tell you! Our troubles are over! Punch yourself and wake up! Laugh! Sing out! Yell!"

The young girl broke into a rippling laugh that was like a sudden burst of song. She threw her arms upward and pirouetted about in the first steps of a dance.

Very peculiar! So Don Ki-Yi thought, looking down from his rock way up there on the cliff. Dancing in that heat! The slender human being with the tawny puma-colored hair was no doubt in the last stages of thirst madness. Singing! Dancing! Laughing! There was no doubt about it. She would whirl about once more like a heel fly buzzing madly in a corral—and then she would flop.

True enough, she flopped on the sand, dropping suddenly to her knees beside a hide-covered water can. Now she was thrusting her hands into it, laughing and crying simultaneously. But, Don Ki-Yi was quick to notice, she did not drink from this can! Her companion was standing above her now holding a smaller receptacle—a canteen. Then he whirled suddenly upon the other woman.

"Look at this, Mapimi, you old wooden-faced button! Feel it. See if you can lift it. It's full."

He thrust the canteen into her hands and it dropped heavily to the sand. The squaw stood there, without a flicker on her grim lips. Her eyes stared at the frenzied youth with a blank but inexorable pity.

"OLD squaw can't holdum so much," she said. "How you gettum canteens out of desert?" The man disregarded the question, perhaps because he had not the answer. "Plumb *cultus* gold no good in desert," the squaw grunted.

"Old Mapimi doesn't know what it is worth," the girl cried, jumping to her feet and dancing again in another feverish but spasmodic outburst of joy. "You won't have to cook any more, Mapimi. Don't you understand? I won't have to keep that chow-cart up at Carson's Spur year in and year out. We work no more. You ought to understand that. And Jim here—he won't be going way off into the sierras staking no-account claims, and leaving us for months at a time."

She paused breathlessly, sank forward into the arms of the hilarious youth who was laughing and yipping and drowning her hysterical cries.

She found herself suddenly bereft of strength, utterly exhausted.

"What's happened?" she murmured incoherently. "I can't believe it. It's like a dream."

"Course it's like a dream," the man, Jim Wellton, laughed. "The great, glitterin', glorious dream that tortures every one that lives near the desert. But *our* dream's true!"

"I can't seem to get my bearings," the girl said helplessly. "The sun is hot. I've got to rest. What's happened to us, Jim? What's happened the last week—the last month?"

"Why, we've found old Crecy's

cache—that's all, Kate!" Wellton cried with a sudden anxious tenderness. "An old pard of your granddad died and left you the map to his cache, and you asked me to bring you and old Mapimi down here."

The girl rubbed her hand dazedly across her forehead. "Now I remember. We were poor. Work, work, work! Drudgery. Always waiting for you to get a good claim so we could be married—and now the dream is true. We're rich—for life!"

"I've led you through a month of Hades down here," Jim Wellton said, "but our troubles are over. It's not Hades any more; it's—"

He was going to say it was heaven. But at that moment he saw a slim, gaunt, ugly beast that seemed carved out of the sandstone. It was crouching off there a hundred feet away on the top of a boulder, watching and waiting.

The sight of that coyote took the word heaven out of Wellton's mouth. A pang went through him. Kate Creswell needed water. Old Mapimi was grumbling something: "No likum gold dust in water *kyacks*. Water heap better. Gold no good. Gold plumb *cultus* bad. Findum water for little white squaw. Findum water for Mapimi, for burro, for cayuse. Coyote wait for us. Coyote savvy something. Wait for us like Jamajam on boulder."

JIM WELLTON drew his revolver. He had an insane and illogical desire to shoot the coyote and wipe out that evil portent, as if the destruction of it would wipe out the fate it portended.

But the girl looked up; and out of her colorless, pain-ridden eyes she saw the gaunt, evil-looking beast watching them. The nearness of the coyote sent

a shock through her. And she reached out her hand, grabbing Jim's arm.

Then with a sudden whim of reassurance she laughed. "Don't shoot the poor critter, Jim. Life's too good. We're celebrating. Everything in the world's got to join us—and live!"

Jim checked an oath. He wanted to cry out aloud and scoff at the girl's sentimentality, at her inane ignorance. That coyote was waiting for them to die. He *knew* they were going to die. He ought to be riddled with bullets. That's what Jim Wellton wanted to cry out. But he said nothing. He slipped his six-gun into the holster, and shambled, staggering toward the burro.

They had no water. The girl knew that, but she did not have to know how serious their plight was.

"There's a water hole marked on the map, somewhere in this mesa up yonder," Jim said tenderly as he pointed to the limitless mass of red cliffs overhanging the wash where they stood. "We'll find it maybe to-day, maybe to-morrow. Once we have water, we're all set. Come on, we'll pack up our fortune and hit the trail."

He had spoken the truth, although his reassuring tone gave the words a somewhat too roseate tinge. Nevertheless, if he could find that water pocket, and if by a merciful act of Providence it was not dry, they would be saved.

Otherwise, with all the gold in the Borax Desert, they would be poorer than when Kate kept her chow-cart in Carson's Spur and Jim borrowed grub-stakes at the general store.

To get out of the desert meant trailing for two hundred miles with a sick cayuse, a burro laden with gold, and a desert sun beating down on them—a sun which has been known to dry

up a man's living body within six hours.

In other words, Don Ki-Yi, making his first appraisal of the queer actions of these poor mortals, was fundamentally right. They were crazed. And as far as he could have prophesied, they were doomed.

CHAPTER III.

A HARVEST OF SALT.

THEY found the water hole the next day. With Kate riding the stove-up cayuse, Mapimi trudging along, her brown, ham-like hand on Kate's saddlehorn, Jim leading the burro with its water cans of gold dust, they zigzagged up through a maze of cañons and washouts and rocky arroyos.

Now the water pocket for which Jim Wellton searched was the same which Don Ki-Yi had visited the day before. But the coyote, skimming down across boulder tops from the summit of the mesa to its base, had covered their day's journey in an hour.

The three wanderers looked down in a dumb stupefaction at the empty bowl. Ring after ring of white lines and salt-encrusted sticks and stones made a picture precisely like a contour map. Jim Wellton leaped to its bottom, falling to his knees in a frantic hope that there would be some residue of milky fluid to slake their thirst. But all he found was a level disk like a snowdrift, throwing up blinding hot rays into his ghastly face; and as he fell forward, his hands sank wrist deep into a fine powdery layer of salt.

It was hot. The sun burned. It shriveled. It scorched.

Jim looked up. Mapimi had helped the girl from her saddle, dragged her

to some shade. The cayuse stood on his spindly, stone-bruised shanks, his shaggy head lowered so that it hung over the rim of the water hole in a stupid and resigned acceptance of the truth.

The burro stood where Jim had left it asleep on its legs—too indolent even to approach the pocket's rim. It had smelled no water there, and so its disappointment was less poignant than any of the others'.

That was the whole picture, except for one final and far more significant detail: A hundred yards away a coyote sat on a rock, watching.

ONCE again a pang went through Jim Wellton, a pang of fear for what might happen to the girl. And this gave way on the instant to a blinding rage. He drew his gun.

This time the girl did not see what was happening. She had not noticed the varmint there on the rock. If she had seen him, she might have shared Jim's horror. A coyote follows a sick cow for one reason only, and that is to wait until she dies. But the girl was oblivious of the drama that was going on off there by the dry pool: the insensate man drawing his gun, the complacent, yellow-eyed varmint sitting on his haunches waiting.

But before pulling the trigger, Jim Wellton lowered his gun. Because of a whimsical, half-crazy reason he did not want to fire at that sun-scorched bundle of hide and bones.

That coyote must know these mesas and plains pretty well, else he would not have wandered so far down into the desert. Hence, *he would know where there was water.*

Prospectors have been saved from time immemorial by their burros smelling out water. But Jim's burro was

too far gone, evidently, to smell anything. Besides, the nearest water might be beyond the reach of its miraculous nose. But here was this coyote . . .

That was the answer, And yet a certain complication presented itself. Just when would the varmint make up his mind to hunt for a drink? Coyotes can go without water for days, weeks, subsisting on lizards or prickly pear or anything else juicy enough to supply enough moisture for a desert-hardened bunch of hide and bones.

"But there hasn't been a lizard or horned toad on this trail for fifty miles," Jim reflected. "That coyote's hungry or I'm a liar. And if he's not thirsty he's goin' to be before I'm through with him."

Without further delay he cut a few hunks of dried salt pork—a commodity for which neither Jim nor his two thirst-tortured companions had any further use—and laid it out on a rock.

Now Don Ki-Yi, of course, was wary of any meat set out on a rock by human hands. And as for traps of any kind, buried under brush or sand, he had an instinctive wisdom which almost approached that of the gray wolf. On the other hand he had enjoyed many a good meal from the garbage and tin-can heaps in the back corrals of ranch houses. And this seemed to come under the latter category.

He sniffed at the delicious hunk of meat with the caution of a cat circling a bowl of hot milk, and then abruptly hunched up his scrawny back and gobbled the meal whole.

JIM WELLTON put his horse and burro into a shady draw, fixed a bed for the girl, shading her not only from the sun but from the fierce glare of the quartz cliffs on the other

side of the cañon. Thus they stayed all afternoon. Jim waited and watched eagerly, tensely, for that coyote to get thirsty. At sunset, Jim threw out another hunk of pork which he had whitened with salt.

The varmint was still voracious, still the champion gourmand of the desert who will eat anything from bad tomatoes to a dead rat. And each time he ate he became less of a coyote and more of a dog.

He understood now why dogs hung around ranches where there were men. Men did not harm them—as they harmed coyotes. Instead they fed them luscious bites of pork. And here was a man who did not shoot him, or lay a trap for him, or put arsenic in the meat he fed him. Here was the kind of a man whom a dog would follow. And here was one who seemed to understand that Don Ki-Yi was not all coyote, pariah, thief.

But during this miracle of rebirth, as the soul of his dog ancestors began to take hold of his body, something else began to take hold of it as well. Something else gripped him with the same insidious urgency.

Thirst!

It was far worse than hunger, far worse than the thirst of desert heat against which Nature had armed him since birth. The tortures began to burn the coyote-dog. It was the same torturing fire, he reflected, in which his adopted master was burning.

Don Ki-Yi skulked off. In his befuddled, heated brain many water holes were calling to him. He knew them all. He knew that most were dry. But now, in his desperation, he remembered one far away that was tucked back in a granite cliff. It was a spring which the sun never reached and had never dried up.

He loped to a *picacho* of rock, lifted his head and started to bark. Of course it was not a bark. It was a yipping, doleful series of howls; and yet somehow the call bore a remote resemblance to the frantic call of a dog trying to awake an inert master.

Jim Wellton saddled up, awoke the girl and the squaw, lifted Kate to the horse's back.

"We've got to eat up some fast trail," he announced. "That coyote is barkin' at us. And what he's sayin' is plumb clear as daylight, which he announces: 'The drinks, folks, are on me!'"

The burro was packed with the gold and what there remained of airtights and flapjack flour. Then when the coyote wandered off again, Jim led the way up through the gorge to the flat mesa above.

Don Ki-Yi was sitting there howling at the moon. And now the sight of his adopted masters emerging from the crack in the mesa plain put an abrupt end to his lamentations. He went off like a gray streak toward the western end of the tableland, vanished in a deep cut.

When the little outfit reached the spot, Jim looked down on a limitless stretch of sand plain, as clear in the moonlight as by day, and saw a tiny black speck moving westward.

The direction was unmistakable. And so were the light feathery prints left by the loping critter on that sand plain.

The following morning, gazing from the tip of a mesa into a deep gorge, Jim Wellton and his companions saw a cave in the side of a cliff. A man was coming out of the cave with a pail which he took to his horse. Could it be possible, or did his eyes deceive him? And yet . . .

The horse immersed its head in the pail, and now it was drinking!

CHAPTER IV.

MOWBRY'S WATER JUG.

DOWN into the bottomlands of that gulch came the queerest assortment of beings that had ever wandered out of the Bad Lands. A gaunt scarecrow of a man was in the lead, carrying a limp form in his arms—the form of a girl.

At some distance behind there followed an Indian squaw, her *appliqué* skirts dragging in the alkaline dust. Behind her was a burro and its pack. And finally, perhaps a mile off, a gaunt stove-up cayuse staggered along, stumbled, foundered in the sand like a wrecked ship.

The crew of thirst-tortured derelicts kept their eyes focused with a mad sort of intensity upon that hole in the side of the cliff. They bent every ounce of their remaining strength to cover that last bit of ground between hell and heaven.

The man staggered as he tried to run with his burden. The squaw shuffled along in big clumsy strides that set up a powdery steam about her barrel-like form. Even the burro seemed to have caught that heart-quickening inspiration. The mouse-colored beast had evidently smelled out their salvation.

The cave was high up in the cliff, at the top of a steep slab of granite several acres in size. A crack in the granite made a natural flume ten feet deep which led from the mouth of the cave to the sand wash of the creek.

A second man was climbing down this flume, carrying a pail of water to his horse. But seeing the outfit of derelicts in the creek bed, he dropped his

pail and, followed by his companion, rushed down to meet them.

One of the strangers was a huge beefy fellow with a jovial red face and twinkling eyes. The other was a bow-legged runt of a man with tangled gray hair that hung to his crooked shoulders.

"By grab, folks, you sure look frayed out a whole lot!" the big one exclaimed in a pitying and fatherly tone. He ran down and took the half-conscious girl from Wellton's arms.

His companion went for the squaw, put his arm about her massive waist and helped her to the shade, where she collapsed like melting gelatin.

Jim Wellton reached the shade at the same time, sank forward to his knees and gasped: "Get the girl a drink—first—quick!"

"Snoot, you run up to the cave and get a jug of water—pronto now!" the big stranger snapped out. Then turning to Jim he said: "You're all right now, folks. We'll take care of you. We'll nurse you back to life, Snoot and me. We're crossin' the desert same as you—on the way to the Big Mesas trappin' for beaver. Which I mean, ole Herb sure loves to cheat the desert whenever she calls a show-down."

He knelt down by the girl's side. "But you got to go easy. We'll all just stay here in the shade till you have your drink and feel better. We got the finest spring of crystal clear water ever flowed out'n a mesa."

The girl's wild, bloodshot eyes stared up at the huge face above her. "A spring?" she gasped. "Crystal clear water..."

THE two minutes which it took the runt named Snoot to hobble up the granite flume for the *olla* of water seemed to stretch out into an eternity. With a dazed impression

that they were camping here for a long time, Jim Wellton staggered over to his burro and relieved the exhausted little beast of its heavy pack.

As he exerted what seemed his last ounce of strength, the sawbuck saddle slid from the burro's back, and the canteen and two precious hide-covered water cans fell with a heavy thud to the sand. Jim turned, his head whirling blindly. For the first time now he thought of his own personal agony. And thus, leaving the dry wash, he started at a frantic staggering run toward the flume and the water cave.

Scarcely two yards away, the big trapper Mowbry was fanning the girl's face with his sombrero. The shade and the sudden breath of moving air seemed to stir her latent misery into life.

"Crystal water!" she was moaning. "You filled our canteens yet?" Then before Herb Mowbry knew what she was doing she crawled on all fours toward the pack at the burro's feet, grabbed the canteen eagerly with her frail shaking hands, and made a terrific but futile attempt to lift it to her lips.

"Poor little kid!" Mowbry exclaimed. "Didn't know you was so far gone. Out'n your head? There now, we'll fix you up. You're goin' to all stay here till you get life and strength back again, and—"

His voice was choked off suddenly in his throat. His wrinkled, jovial little eyes popped.

Somehow the girl had slid the canteen toward her and unscrewed the stopper. Her head had fallen back weakly to the sand, and her face was turned so that the nozzle touched her lips.

Out of the nozzle, Herb Mowbry saw a trickle of dust that flashed brilliantly

in gorgeous yellow specks, making a rivulet on the girl's oval chin and down her throat.

Mowbry lumbered up from his knees. His eyes were still popping, his jaw hanging. But slowly he brought his jaws together. On his huge moon of a face there was that perpetual and jovial smile even now when his lips were tightened and compressed.

He glanced up quickly at Wellton, the tattered scarecrow of a man who was scrambling up the flume in an effort to hasten the bringing of that water. Fat and cumbersome though he was, Herb Mowbry had no difficulty in scrambling up the flume and passing Jim, just as little Snoot came hobbling down with an earthen *olla* of water in his hands.

Big Mowbry, excited and perspiring, grabbed the jug from his diminutive partner, turned and headed down the flume again. He met the befuddled, half-frenzied Wellton scrambling up toward him.

Jim Wellton reached out his gaunt shaking hands. Every cell in his body cried out for a sip of that precious water. But he checked himself and pointed to his companions.

"The girl—and the old woman—" he gasped weakly.

"Sure! I'm takin' it to 'em," Mowbry said quickly. "You come on down with me. I'll dole it out to the three of you a sip at a time."

Jim Wellton lurched down after him. And then came Snoot, somewhat perplexed at the way his partner had caught the derelicts' mad excitement.

Mowbry, in fact, was so excited that when he got through that last patch of mesquite, he stumbled and fell. The earthen *olla* dropped from his huge clumsy hands and cracked to pieces on a slab of quartz. The sparkling water

splashed outward, making a fan-shaped stain in the darkened alkali.

CHAPTER V.

THE VALUE OF WATER.

THREE wretched, thirst-maddened beings threw themselves upon that fan of moistened earth. Jim Wellton scooped up a handful of mud, rubbed it on the girl's burning forehead. The girl clutched fistfuls of it and plastered her tortured lips. The squaw lay face downward, pressing her mouth to the wet sand like some cumbersome sort of beast drinking at the edge of a pool.

"By grab, ain't that plumb awkward of me?" big Mowbry exclaimed, wiping his streaming red forehead. "Broke the jug to smithereens. But there now, that's all right. We'll fetch some more; only we'll have to go up to the cave. Come on, Snoot, we'll get a couple of buckets from the pool pronto!"

Both men were gone—scurrying up the bank, running toward the flume. Snoot started the ascent, but Mowbry stopped at the shady draw where the newcomers' horses were tethered. He stooped down on the run, grabbing a shotgun and a holstered revolver. Before Jim Wellton saw what he had done he was climbing the steep flume, holding his weapons before him so that they could not be seen.

Jim Wellton had the impression that they were toting buckets. By no fantastic stretch of imagination or suspicion could he have guessed the truth. Deadly weapons were far removed from the present crisis.

At least that was Jim's point of view. And now, maddened at the delay which the breaking of that jug had caused,

he scrambled to his feet and staggered once more toward the flume and the goal at the top—a goal which was the symbol of life.

When a third of the difficult slippery ascent had been gained, the grizzled little runt, Snoot, popped out of the cave and came sliding down the sandy bottom of the crevice toward him.

"Boss 'll be right down, mister," he called as he came within twenty feet of Jim. Then for some strange reason he paused. "Be here directly with a pail of the finest water in these mountains."

He stood up, one hand on the steep rock wall, the other hanging at his side—the side where he wore an unflapped holster. His wrinkled, leathery face was cocked in a queer attitude of swagger and caution.

"But before he gets here," he went on in a tight-throated, guarded voice, "he told me to settle up a little point."

Jim Wellton stiffened. Instinctively he paused in his climb and stared in a sudden stupefaction at the ugly little runt facing him.

"Settle a point!" he repeated voicelessly. "What sort of palaver is that? We want water. We're goin' crazy for it—and you talk about settlin' a point!"

"Just a little point," Snoot Hagey wheedled. "Last time we picked up a prospector and let him help himself to our waterpack—for himself and his burros—why, he wouldn't pay us..."

JIM saw red. The rock walls, the glittering sand and pebbles, the black hole at the upper end of the flume, the granite cliff behind—the whole world turned into a vortex of crimson flames. And in the center of the vortex was this ugly black little thing, like a venomous spider in the center of a web.

"*Wouldn't pay you!*" Jim gasped in fury. "You talk about pay for water when we're dyin' of thirst! You murderous little rat! I'll..."

His hand went groping and shaking for his gun. And at the same instant, despite his blurred vision, he saw the runt's hand make the same gesture.

Two guns barked out. As Jim fired he felt the burn of a slug whizzing past his ear. He staggered somewhat, then steadied himself, scowling into the pulsating heat.

The runt had fallen. He was clutching a bleeding arm, his face turned upward, ghastly and hideous.

"So you think that's your way out, do you?" the grizzled little hombre snarled. The snarl was like that of a cornered rat, except that there was something audacious and taunting in it. "Well, let me tell you somethin', hombre, afore you finish me. If you bump me off, you'll never see a drop of water again!"

In his fury Jim had once more raised his gun. But he did not fire. The words spewed between those stained teeth and gray lips began to filter into his consciousness.

The runt was still speaking rapidly, biting, with the same snarling, swaggering note:

"Look here now, hombre, afore you shoot! The Boss, he's back there in the cave. You can't get to the cave without you climb up here. He's way back in the cave where it's pitch dark, but he can see you. You're out here where it's light, climbin' up slow for fifty yards." He waited for this to sink in. "Besides that, he's got a shot-gun. A hundred chances to one, a thousand to one, ag'in' you. Now maybe you'll listen to reason."

At that moment Jim Wellton was listening to something else. It was a

girl's voice coming from the creek bed. She was not twenty yards away, but it seemed as if she called from a distant world, a distant hell, pleading for a drop of moisture to touch her tongue.

Jim drew his hand from his holster flap.

"I'll pay you," he said with a curse. Then desperately, "I'll pay you *any* price!"

The runt picked his gun from the ground, holstered it, then scrambled to his feet. His arm, bleeding from the flesh wound, hung by his side. The pain of it took away something of his cockiness. He realized now that his adversary was a good shot and quick at the draw.

"You see, pard, it's like this," he said wheedlingly. "The Boss he says we been workin' and trappin' and slav'in' for years and never earned more'n our grubstake. When some one else is in luck—like you folks—it's only fair to give us a decent break." Then he came out with it cautiously: "We want—that there canteen—of dust!"

Once again a moan from the tortured soul in the sand behind him stayed Jim Wellton's gun hand. He stood a moment, reeling, staring from bloodshot, half-blinded eyes at the black crooked thing in front of him. As he stared the figure was trembling, shaking, bobbing up and down in a web of blinding flashes.

"If you don't like it, just say so, pard," he heard that same uncanny voice saying. "But don't kill me. 'Tain't *my* bargain. It's the Boss made it. Refuse the offer, and I'll drop out of the game. The Boss 'll finish it. He'll just stay in his cave where he could hold off an army, and you'll be out here slowly dyin' of thirst. You and the squaw, and the poor little lady."

Jim Wellton reeled back to the mouth of the flume, staggered out on the sand wash and picked up the canteen. Then with an oath he hurled it at the man's feet.

It was as if he were hurling a bone at a mangy dog which he feared might approach too close and contaminate him.

CHAPTER VI.

VULTURES.

WRAPPING a bandanna about his wounded arm, the ugly, crooked form of Snoot went hobbling up the granite flume. He seemed to have shrunk a size or two since the shooting. Like a spider that has been partly squashed, he seemed hunched up, shapeless, his whole being concentrated to a smaller but more potent bit of venom.

He entered the cave. The big, apprehensive Mowbry was waiting in a cool dank chamber of pitch darkness for the return of his emissary.

"Light the lantern. I'm creased," Snoot muttered. "No, you don't need to be scairt. The kid ain't goin' to fight. I told him he couldn't get anywheres near this cave!"

Mowbry lit a jack lantern and the flame was multiplied against walls of glittering quartz, reflected in a perfect image on the smooth surface of a pool.

The floor of the cave was littered with the trappers' outfit—food, blanket rolls, cooking utensils, beaver traps which they had been oiling that morning. They had taken possession of the rock-walled chamber, using it as their lodgings for a few days' rest during their journey across the Bad Lands. It was probably the only cool spot

within the radius of a hundred miles. In anticipating a possible siege, Mowbry was assured of every material comfort.

The light was suffered to burn for but a moment. Mowbry knew that as long as he remained there in the darkness with his shotgun ready, there was no possible chance of his being ousted. Even from where Mowbry sat in hiding, he commanded an unobstructed view of the narrow defile up which a man must come before reaching the cave's mouth.

In that moment of light which Mowbry granted himself, he took the canteen from his henchman, poured out a pile of glittering dust in his fat wet palm, stared at it with tiny gleaming, laughing eyes, sifted it back again into the nozzle.

"Ought to be five-ten thousand dollars' worth of the stuff right here!" he purred, his huge moon face beaming in the yellow light.

"Give me my half now, Boss," little Snoot wheedled. "Then I'll take the water down. He won't wait two minutes. They're all three of 'em crazy. Got to take down a pail of it right away pronto or we'll both get plugged."

"Plugged? Not in here." Mowbry laughed. "I'll stay in here two weeks if he makes me—"

"But he ain't goin' to make you, Boss!" the other exclaimed. "He agreed to the dicker. Give me my half, and I'll—"

"Wait a minute." Mowbry looked into his henchman's upturned face.

"You say they're all three of them crazy?"

"You know it as well as me. Givin' away ten thousand dollars for a drink—ain't that crazy? No right-minded man would do it."

Mowbry turned down the wick, and his henchman had the memory of a huge red face that twinkled with blobs of sweat, each blob like his eyes, gleaming, sparkling, yellow.

"Crazy, yes," his master's words came to him in the sudden pitch darkness. "But it ain't crazy enough."

"You mean you ain't satisfied with this much?"

"Not exactly. *They've got more.*"

"How you figure that?"

"I see the way those gallon cans of theirs crashed down from the burro's back. Like to've burst open when they fell to the sand. They're full of gold. Ten thousand ain't but a small part!"

"Hell ding, Boss! If you send me down again without the water, he'll just plumb 'sassinate me!"

"No, he won't. You got his number. He's tryin' to save that girl. He knows if he dumps you she won't never see a drop of water in this diggin's. You go down. Tell him you want one of them big cans."

"Listen, Boss, he'll curl me up. He'll drill me. He'll . . ."

SNOOT did not finish his plea. He still had the vision of that gleaming yellow face, those tiny yellow eyes multiplied to infinity by the blobs of sweat as if the rotund head were the head of a many-eyed insect. Mowbry was crazed with gold lust. And Snoot, knowing him well, knew that this was no time to disobey his command.

The task he had to perform was a delicate one. He was the bearer of evil tidings, coming from a crazed man to one who was crazier. But up to a certain point, he played his part with considerable skill. He did not go fawning and begging for mercy, which had been his first impulse. Instead he

assumed a certain air of indifference. He had a proposition to make. Wellton could take it or leave it. If he accepted the terms all would be well. If not, he could stay there in the boulder-wash with his womenfolk until the sun dried up their brains.

"Now don't fly off the handle, mister," he called, before getting within range. "Leave me come down there and tell you what's happened. My Boss is gone plumb daft. You're in a fix, and it's only me that can help you out."

Jim Wellton had seen the little runt approaching cautiously—and empty-handed. The realization that that water was to be bought at a great price had worked in a peculiar way upon the frenzied youth. He knew that they were to play a desperate game. When the *olla* of water had been held practically to their lips and then smashed to the ground, the torture which was the torture of Tantalus in Hades had thrown all three into a veritable delirium. But now one of those three unlucky mortals had calmed down sufficiently to think.

"Come here," Jim said in a husky, labored voice. "I'm not going to dump you. You've shown that won't get us anywhere. I won't draw. Come down here."

Hagey obeyed, gibbering rapidly as he came. "He saw the stuff, mister, and it was like a red flag to a bull. He's been huntin' for that stuff all his life, and never got enough to pay for out-fittin' himself. Same with me. Only I don't go torturin' folks for it. We're both of us desperate, broken varmints. The desert's treated you different. It's only fair we get a little turn of luck. You're young. You got years to hunt up another lode. But me and the Boss, we're—"

The squaw burst out with a wail which was like the doleful howl of a lost dog. At the same instant Wellton cried out with a maddened oath: "Enough of this palaver! You get any price you ask. Only, in the name of Heaven bring us water!"

Snoot Hagey licked his lips. His eyes fell hungrily upon the two gold-filled cans.

"MY Boss, he wants both of them cans," he announced.

"Both!" Wellton gasped. "You mean you're not leavin' us even half of our fortune?"

"He wants all of it," Hagey said firmly, then added with a whine, "and ain't it only fair?"

"Take it! Take it all, you crawlin' rattler! And take it quick. I'll give you a minute to get it out of my sight—or, so help me God, I'll fill you full of lead!"

Hagey sidled quickly over to the treasure, thrusting down his left hand so that he groped for one of the cans, while his eyes were still focused upon Wellton.

Wellton stood crouching, lean, a black sinister figure against the low afternoon sun.

Yes, there was but a minute of grace, Hagey knew that. He would have to take the gold and get out of gun range on the instant. The pity of it was that he could not pick up both cans and run. They were too heavy. They would have to be dragged.

But the very weight of that first can which his left hand had grabbed sent a thrill through the hunched little form.

If the canteen of dust which he had already taken to the Boss were worth ten thousand, what would this gallon can be worth? And there was not

only this can. There was another. He would get one as his half. A fortune was within his grasp! His heart pounded savagely in his pigeon chest. A fortune! And all he had to do was to drag it up that cliff to his waiting partner.

Once there, Snoot Hagey knew well enough he would never again face this murderous-looking young *lobo*. Of course, were he to fulfill the bargain he would have to come out and give him a pail of water. But who was going to fulfill any bargain? Not Mow-bry. And not Snoot Hagey. If they brought out water, then the three fugitives would live. Sometime they would have their revenge. Why save the life of a man who would hunt you to the ends of the earth in order to have revenge?

A hoard of gold, a day or two besieged in the cool recesses of that water cave until the derelicts were dead—and then freedom, untold wealth, a life of untrammelled indolence and luxury!

The safest thing to do, of course, was to take one of those cans at a time. But Hagey had caught something of his master's gold lust. If he took one, he might never get the other.

The half-mad hombre standing off there on a sand mound might change his mind. To come down a second time, still without water, while that girl was lying in the sand moaning, would be the last straw. The young hombre would go amuck. Of course he would never get his water then, but what would that profit Snoot Hagey? Snoot would be lying in the sand riddled with lead.

He reached down with his wounded hand, still watching the slim, dark form. Each hand now was clutching a can of treasure. A spasm of pain went up his wounded arm, but it was

forgotten in the spasm of ecstasy that gripped his avaricious little pigeon chest.

One heavy, gold-laden can moved, but the other would not. For an instant he paused, frustrated.

IT was the instant Jim Wellton was praying for.

"Keep your hands right where they are—clutchin' those cans, hombre," he called out quietly. "I can pot you easy from where I'm standin'. Right in the side of the head is where you'll get it if you move."

Snoot froze stiff on the rock slab, like a lizard frightened at a rustle in the brush.

Wellton's voice, husky, unsteady, shaking, assumed a biting triumphant note: "If you'd taken one of those cans instead of both, you could have made it," he said.

The next moment he had Hagey's gun and was strapping his arms behind his back.

The rage of the venomous little runt lasted for but a moment. Then an insolent grin twisted his lips.

"All right," he grunted. "You got me prisoner. But if you don't have me to tote them cans up to Mowbry, just how you goin' get to water?"

Jim Wellton did not deign to answer. As a matter of fact he had no answer to that poignant question. His first thought was that one man would be easier to fight than two. The only trouble was that the one adversary who was left did not intend to fight at all. Snoot's master obviously intended to entrench himself and let the desert heat do his fighting for him.

Nevertheless, with Snoot taken prisoner, Wellton was now free to leave the dry wash, his companions and the treasure and make some plan of attack.

His first move was to order his prisoner into a brush-filled washout of the creek bed, and place the squaw as a guard over him. The squaw sat at the opening of the washout, her massive back against a boulder, a six-gun—Snoot's own weapon—in her hand. Wellton then hurried up to the thirst-maddened girl.

"As soon as the sun goes down we're goin' to have all the water we can drink," he assured her.

The girl lifted her face to him with an agonized, dog-like look of bewilderment. What had happened to the water? Why were they waiting hours, days, eternities for that promised drink? Where were the trappers who had come to save them? Why did Jim have such a murderous flame in his eyes?

Jim did not attempt to explain. His problem of life and death he kept to himself.

Yet he had what he believed to be the answer to that problem. And he had expressed it in that one word: Sunset.

When night came he estimated that the narrow flume in the rock which led up to the mouth of the water cave would be veiled in darkness. There would be a short space of time between sunset and moonrise during which he could crawl up that flume unseen by the ogre in the cave. He would crawl up inch by inch, silently, stealthily, without crackling a twig or dislodging a stone. When he reached the mouth of the cavern he would hide behind a boulder and wait. Then would come the moonlight. When the first rays slanted across the eastern mesa, he estimated that there might be enough light to see for some distance within the cave. Then he would start shooting.

It was a desperate enough hope, but at least it changed the odds that were against him while there was light.

CHAPTER VII.

JAWS OF STEEL.

THUS he waited. The sun rolled down toward the sierra on the western horizon, swelled to a giant ball, turned the sky blood-red, cast the shadow of the earth against the deep indigo of the sky in the east.

And Herb Mowbry likewise waited in the dank cool darkness of the cave—crafty, complacent, resigned to the passing of any time his victims chose to measure.

But when he saw his henchman down there in the dry wash make that nonsensical blunder—the blunder of being caught—Mowbry's flabby body began to feel the creeping touch of a nameless, intangible fear. Snoot, numskull that he was, had not been counted on for any fighting. He was no fighter. But he was at least a tool that Mowbry had found very useful.

With Snoot on hand to obey every command, Mowbry could play the sort of game for which he had a genius—the game of bargaining, palavering, trickery. Big Mowbry was not a fighter either. But now with his emissary taken as a hostage, the game of palavering was over. It had, after all, come to a show-down which involved fighting and murder.

Herb Mowbry's mind followed the same logical groove which Jim Wellton's had traveled. With light out there in the approach to the cave's mouth, the odds were a hundred to one in favor of the man in the cave. Or rather the odds were a hundred to nothing.

But when darkness came the whole game was changed. The odds would be no longer a hundred to one. They would be nearer to fifty-fifty. And a fifty-fifty proposition in a gun battle with that gaunt, desperate young *lobo* did not appeal to Herb Mowbry. He was not a gambler, and he was not a gun fighter. He was more like a card sharp who had planned to fix a deck so that he could not possibly lose.

But now the cards needed a little more fixing. It was necessary to divest the deck of the one card that might beat him.

He looked down at the dry wash. The girl was lying in the shade, her head and shoulders screened from Mowbry's view by a clump of chaparral. Her companion had just left her and headed down the wash toward the squaw. Thus for a moment he was out of sight.

This was the state of affairs when Herb Mowbry fixed that one additional, necessary card in the cold deck.

He picked up the largest of his traps and crawled to the mouth of the cave. Then getting down on all fours he covered the trap with a branch of mesquite and dragged it down into the flume.

Thus, without making a sound, he quickly forced back the trap's jaws, set the spring, placed it in the middle of the steep trail, and scooped a little mound of sand over it. He did not stay to pound a peg in the earth to which to attach the end of the chain. He just left it there and scurried back into the cave.

At that instant Jim Wellton came back, saw him, drew his gun and fired.

A slug whined through the air, ricocheted along the side of the flume just as the big hulking back of Mowbry disappeared in the dark hole.

The trap was set, and no one but Herb Mowbry himself was the wiser.

HOURS later the hodgepodge of splintered peaks and cañons and alluvial plains turned into a dull monotone of color, cross-hatched with jet black scratches which were its gorges, arroyos, creek beds.

Totally ignorant of the splendid and inexorable climax which his master had arranged for this drama, Snoot lay tucked away in the mesquite thorn, bound, wounded, terrified. His arm throbbed in pain, his brain reeled groggily, his bloodshot eyes, peering like a rat's through the brush, were focused upon the ponderous black shadow which was the squaw—his guard.

Two hundred and thirty pounds of bone and sinew, of Indian stoicism, of dumb misery; that was the straw at which this drowning man—Snoot—would clutch.

Jim Wellton had approached the flume, waiting for the propitious moment to make his advance. Snoot assured himself that Wellton was out of earshot. The squaw was the only one to deal with now.

"Hey, you!" Snoot called in a low vibrant voice. "You—over there. Help me. My arm—it's killing me!"

A grunt which was eloquent of scorn and suppressed agony was the only answer. She might have said: "What business is that of mine? Let it kill you. It's what you deserve. I have my own misery." The single grunt expressed all that and more.

"If you'll only slip this here riata down a few inches, so's it won't cut into me! It was a bad crease, y'understand, *señora*? The slug tore up lengthwise above the elbow. I'm bleedin' to death."

Another grunt came in answer. It was but one syllable which could have been interpreted, "What is a wounded arm compared to thirst?"

The runt snarled back viciously: "A caterwopous idiot, that's what I am, askin' a breed like you for mercy. I see now why Injuns always turn their prisoners over to their squaws. There's some mercy in a man, but nary a bit in a squaw." His voice softened again to pleading. "All right, listen. If you're gloatin' over my misery, it's no use my beggin'. I won't beg, I'll lay my cards down, like it was man-to-man and not man to a Injun squaw.

"Listen: When I went up to see the *maestro* I slipped out a nugget, savvy? He don't know. He'd kill me if he knew. But it's in my vest pocket, savvy? You come and pick it out. It's yourn. And all as you have to do in return is to untie this one knot, so's my wounded arm will be free. My wounded arm ain't goin' to do no hurt. It's plumb useless. Can't you hear me? You deaf? A *pepita* of solid gold—I'm tellin' you!"

This time the squaw vouchsafed more than a grunt. It was a chuckle of dry, mordant, agonized humor:

"Ole squaw no wantum *pepita*. Ketchum *olla* with water—heap better than all nuggets in desert."

SNOOT'S heavy breathing, a series of suppressed warning snarls, was suddenly cut short. His heart pounded heavily, murderously sending the blood pulsating in rhythms of pain through his arm. The squaw's incoherent words had suggested the one final card that Snoot could play.

"Listen, ole woman. Water is what you want. And water is one thing you ain't none of you goin' to get. That is, not if you go on rollin' this kind of a

game. But there's a way out. Not for the white hombre—no, don't think that. He's goin' to die—slowly, moanin', dryin' up, savvy? But you ain't. *You're goin' to get a drink.*"

He saw a sudden frigidity of the huge shapeless shadow. It was as if the squaw had cocked her head, her bull-like neck stiffening, her ear turned an infinitesimal space in the direction from which those glorious words had come.

There was no sound from her rigid throat. But Snoot could hear a faint pitiful moan from the darkness of the boulder-wash beyond the hulking form.

"Mapimi—bring me water—just a drop for my tongue," the girl over there was gibbering. "You won't let me die—Mapimi. Jim's gone. He's been gone—it seems like hours—days. He won't come back. Mapimi, you're all I have left. Just a drop of—water."

"You hear that, old woman?" Snoot whispered eagerly. "She'll get a drink, too. I'll bring some for you both. It's only the man who ain't goin' to get it. But we ain't torturin' you two women. We don't do that. We ain't that kind."

He hurried on frantically, still scarcely above a whisper, knowing that the very silence of that black figure presaged hope. "Untie me, savvy? I'll crawl through the mesquite. I'll get up the bank yonder and slip down into the flume where the brush screens me. He won't know nothin' about it, your man who's waitin' yonder."

The shadow was still immovable, taut, crouching, bull-necked; and silent. It seemed to typify the whole stoic but gullible race to which white men had given many promises—promises that were never kept.

Would old Mapimi be gullible? Or

would she fight the agony of her thirst with the stoicism of her ancient race? Or would she show pity?

Lying with his head twisted eagerly, his red little eyes bulging, peering fiercely at that grim shadow, Snoot could see no sign of an answer to those questions. He pleaded, begged, whimpered, promised. But the secret of Mapimi's conflict was still hidden in the darkness, as if she were a squat, carved sphinx.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INDIAN DECIDES.

JIM WELLTON climbed into the flume where his gaunt, black figure, silhouetted against the gray of the sand wash, could be seen by the man in the cave.

Jim was resolved to wait just long enough until the crevice in the rock, which was the trail to the water cave, had turned jet black. He would wait no longer. The girl must have water. Every moment now was like a thin wavering line between life and death.

Besides, the journey up that flume would be a long one. It was scarcely a hundred yards, but Jim must traverse that trail by inches. The slightest sound would betray his presence and invite a deadly charge of buckshot from the cave's mouth. The man up there in the cave would be listening with his ears attuned to the slightest rustle of a blade of dry weed.

At least that was what Jim Wellton thought. But he was mistaken.

Herb Mowbry was listening for no such infinitesimal and uncertain signal. He was sitting on the floor of his cavern, supremely complacent, waiting for a much more definite call to battle. It would be the clang of a

steel trap, the crunching of bone, the gasp of astonishment and fear from a man's throat.

He had already fixed the aim of his shotgun upon the trap, resting its short muzzle on a water bucket, propping the butt with two rocks, so that when the signal came, all he would have to do was to touch the trigger. Let the trapped man be covered by the velvet blackness of night, shielded from the dim starlight by the granite walls of that flume—it would make no difference in Mowbry's calculations.

The distance from gun muzzle to trap was just enough to give the charge time to spread. Nor would it spread too much. It would be a pattern of shot not quite a foot in diameter. The intruder of course would be on his hands and knees, perhaps on his stomach as he crawled up in the attack. The pattern would cover his head, face, shoulders.

The sparse and scattered life on all that desolate landscape seemed suspended for a moment after the sun went down. The coyote that had been sending up his mournful lamentations in a near-by cut, held his peace for that silent space of time between the desert sunset and the coming of night.

Then Jim Wellton heard the girl's voice crying out to him, faint, pitiable, strangely remote—a call which spurred him on. He loosened the gun in his holster, got down to his hands and knees. He was like an animal crouching, bristling. A few moments more and he would wager his life on the turn of a card.

BUT then as his eyes dilated to the deepening shadows of the crevice, which the flume revealed, he saw a gray slim wraith leap noiselessly into the flume's bed some distance ahead of

him. He uttered a half-audible curse at this interruption to the game, and then, straining his eyes still more eagerly, he watched what was happening.

He made out the spare, bony outlines of a coyote, snooping up the trail toward the water hole. The man in the cave would doubtless be able to see the beast as clearly as Jim could see it. Perhaps he—the one in the cave—would be foolish enough to shoot it. That would empty his gun and the flash would reveal his exact position. Jim could then make a sudden rush up the narrow defile, hurl six shots into the mouth of the cavern before his enemy could reload.

But Mowbry did not fire. He waited with a stone in hand, ready to chase the coyote away as soon as he came close enough.

Jim Wellton crawled up into the flume, still focusing his dilated eyes upon that hardly visible gray shadow snooping up the trail.

It all happened quickly. The coyote slid up like the shadow of a bird skimming over the ground; then, for no reason at all as far as Jim could make out, the varmint paused in his tracks, bristled, began to sniff.

Don Ki-Yi was an expert in the fine art of avoiding buried traps. This trap had been buried but a few moments before; and the scent of a man hung thickly over the hot sand.

He nosed about in a semicircle for a moment, emitting a cautious and knowing snort. Then he leaped up to a narrow shelf of rock just above the trail which was hardly wide enough to hold a chuckwalla and, when a few yards beyond the dangerous ground, dropped to the trail again and headed skulking toward the cave's mouth.

A sharp rock hurled from inside the

cave caught him on his bony shoulder. With a yelp of anger Don Ki-Yi swung about like a fish on a line and headed down the flume again. But he did not forget the mound of newly heaped-up earth in the center of his path. This time he leaped across it, sailing through the air like a flying squirrel, a fleeting gray shadow which no longer had the form of legs or body or low crouched head. It merely flitted along, whirled again when it caught once more the scent of a human being waiting down there at the base of the defile.

A man behind him throwing rocks, a buried trap, another man in front of him; this situation did not baffle Don Ki-Yi. He skimmed along up the side of the almost perpendicular bank, his nimble toes catching little more than an inch-wide outcrop of rock or a stubby root in a crevice until he slid easily over the crest of the wall to the surface of the granite slab.

Jim saw no further trace of him. He had vanished as completely as a fleeting dream. But his visitation had worked wonders. A moment later he sat on a divide lifting his head toward the east where the moon had already given a faint intimation in the sky of its rising. No living thing in that grim dark world could have seen Don Ki-Yi, but every one heard him. His throat was vibrating in a series of doleful barks which presently blended together into an unhappy, howling dirge.

THAT call had sent a thrill of anger through Jim's body when he had heard it before, wavering across the thin hot air of the Bad Lands. But this time it was like a song from a guardian angel. That desert Jeremiah, uttering his lamentations to the moon, was a hero. Twice he had saved the lives of the three derelicts whom he had

wanted to adopt; first by leading them to water, and now by revealing to Jim Wellton the position of the buried trap.

Jim did not attempt to crawl up that death trail. The actions of the coyote at the mound of sand had been all too clear. Instead he got up, hiked back to the sand wash, groped his way through the brush toward his prisoner.

His plan was simple and definite. Its object was to ascertain precisely how he could pass that buried trap without being caught. He knew approximately where it was, but to grope his way over a bit of ground in the pitch dark and risk passing a buried trap without springing it was suicidal. Even if he were fortunate enough not to get caught, he might spring the trap and thus give his adversary the signal for which he was waiting.

The answer was easy. He could send his prisoner, the wounded runt, with a torch of burning mesquite and watch just how he passed that trap. The only flaw in this plot lay in the chance that Snoot knew nothing of the trap. But that, after all, made no difference. If he knew, he would avoid it, and Jim would watch his every step. If he did not know, he would spring the trap his fellow-murderer had set. It was cruel—but not so cruel as the ruthless torture to which those two had doomed Jim and the girl and Mapimi; not so cruel as the thirst burning up the girl Jim loved.

Passing the girl where she lay in the dry wash, Jim gave a quick answer to her gasping pleas. It was an answer of complete, indubitable assurance. She would have water in a few moments now. There was a pool of crystal water up there in the cave in the cliffs. He was going up for it now. But first, he explained, he must tell old Mapimi the good news.

He found Mapimi slouched down heavily in the sand of the wash, as if her bones had crumpled, unable to hold up the massive weight of tortured flesh.

"We're goin' to get our drink right away, Mapimi," he said. "You savvy what I'm sayin'? Water. Heap plenty. Pails of it. Water for you, for the little girl, for me, for burro. Savvy that talk?"

Yes, she savvied very well. In fact, she had savvied it before Jim told her. "Plumb *cultus* little hombre mak' promise. He keepum promise," she said.

"What you mean by that?" Jim asked with a sudden qualm.

"I cutt um riata. Hombre crawl away in brush like chuckwalla. He fetchum heap much water—"

Jim whirled about, diving into the brush where he had deposited his prisoner, the prisoner who was to be a precious and indispensable factor in their salvation.

But Mapimi, true to the ancient gullibility and treachery of the redskin, had believed her prisoner and proved faithless to her master.

Snoot, of course, was gone

CHAPTER IX.

SHOTS.

WITHOUT another word to the blundering and perfidious old Indian, Jim Wellton turned and ran up the boulder-wash toward the mouth of the flume. He had just left the flume a moment before, and while he had been there waiting Snoot could not have passed. But during his short absence he realized that the runt could have entered it. He must proceed cautiously.

And that is just what had happened. Jim heard the rustle of twigs, the soft clatter of stones—sounds which were brought down clearly a good fifty yards because of the acoustics of the granite flume.

He raised his gun, peering intently, futilely up the length of the narrow crevice, but concluded at the same instant that it was useless to fire. Instead he started up the flume, with the faint hope of overtaking the fugitive before the latter reached his haven, the cave. But when he had advanced some thirty yards, Jim stopped abruptly. He must not forget that trap! And as he stopped he listened, this time hoping desperately that Snoot might betray his presence.

But there was not the slightest sound now of dislodged pebble or crackling twig. The fugitive evidently had adopted a safer course. Snoot evidently knew that Wellton had entered the flume and was hurrying up after him, listening for the first chance to blaze away.

As a matter of fact, little Snoot found himself in a quandary. He wanted to call out to his master, Herb Mowbry, that he was coming. Otherwise Mowbry would most certainly fire at him. But if he did call out, the pursuer behind would fire!

Caught on the two horns of this dilemma, the fear-ridden runt continued his advance—now by crawling noiselessly over the sand and rocks of the flume's bottom, realizing that every moment increased his danger. Wellton was coming, he could hear, although he had checked himself in his rash advance. Mowbry must be waiting, listening for whatever signal he had prearranged with himself to open fire.

A few feet farther, and Snoot realized that he must call the show-

down. He opened his mouth to warn his master not to fire, but only a voiceless gasp came from his drivelling, trembling lips. He crawled another yard, took a deep breath, and his lips drew back once more over the tightened teeth. He was a like a mad dog with jaws setting grimly at the whiff of water. Another yard, and for the third time he tried to call, expecting confidently that the sound of his voice would bring a slug of lead zipping into his back.

This time the gasping breath became vocal.

"Hey, Boss!" he cried in terror. "It's me! It's Snoot! Don't fire! I'm comin' up to you! Don't—"

He got up from his hands and knees and lunged forward. He lunged a step too far.

Waiting doubly secure in his rock-bound retreat, Herb Mowbry heard the two men coming up the flume. There was a sudden *mêlée* of tiny noises, of hobnail boots clicking on slabs, of stones rolling down the bank, of a man grunting. These sounds, small as they were, seemed abnormally loud, terrifying in the echoing defile of rock. And in the *mêlée* Herb Mowbry heard Snoot's voice announcing himself.

It broke into his terrified consciousness like something alien, incredible, frustrating. He had not expected Snoot's voice. The enemy was coming—that was all that Herb Mowbry could think. Snoot also was coming—apparently. But that made no difference in the crisis.

IT all happened too quickly for careful analysis. There came the clang of steel and the sharp frantic gasp of a man. Mowbry pulled the trigger of his shotgun.

Jim Wellton was at a safe distance behind the ill-fated Snoot. Some stray shot stung his shoulder, but the bulk of the charge had been stopped by the trapped man in front of him. It tore into the pigeon chest in a murderous and concentrated pattern.

The runt was out of the battle. Now for the man in the cave. Jim had clearly seen the flash of the gun far within the maw of the cave. As the after-image of that flash turned from yellowish white to purple, Jim fired three shots, as if aiming at a clearly marked bull's-eye.

The distant clatter of a water pail inside the cave answered the bark of his gun, together with the heavy, muffled thud of a body falling upon damp earth.

As he passed the shapeless body of Snoot and crawled into the cave, he heard the faint breathing of a mortally wounded man. And the next moment, listening tensely, he heard it end in a death-rattle.

He went to the cave's end, one foot striking sharply against a pail. He stood a moment, fumbling for a match. The smell of powder smoke clung to the velvet dark. But at the same time a faint coolness seemed to come upward from the ground at his feet. He took another step, lurched forward, caught his balance, and landed knee-deep in cool water.

The match created a bright flare of light, multiplied by many twinkling ripples all about him. A little behind him on the shelf of damp earth he saw a huddled form, which was what remained of Herb Mowbry, bargainer, diplomat, dealer in the desert's precious commodity—water.

No funeral rites detained Jim Wellton in that cave. He snatched up the bucket, dipped it deep, ran out and

down the flume in long, eager, triumphant strides.

THE moon was up. The coyote was regaling the desert with a lugubrious and unrequested encore. Don Ki-Yi was totally unaware of the vital rôle he had played in the fates of those derelicts. He had come to the conclusion he was not particularly important in their scheme of things.

Nor were they particularly important in his. After all, he was not a dog, but a coyote.

That strange transitory welling up of the dog instinct was once more submerged, forgotten. For a short space of time he had yearned for the companionship of some living thing in a desert which life had forsaken. But the companionship of human beings was certainly something which this particular coyote could see no cause to rave about.

The three derelicts, and these other two whom they had come to visit, were a locoed bunch anyway. They threw stones at him when he tried to get to their water cave; they fed him salt pork when he was thirsty; they set traps for him just the same as any human beings he had ever dealt with. And besides this they did things which from a coyote's point of view were not at all sensible.

They carried some no-account stuff in their canteens instead of water; they wandered about on dry desert trails, shouting and laughing and crying, even when dying of thirst; and then when they did come to a crystal-clear well, they lay down in a dry wash or palavered or tied each other up, or shot off their guns instead of doing the sensible thing, which was to drink.

What was the sense of hanging around people like that?

As Don Ki-Yi gazed down contemptuously and ruefully at the moonlit scene, he saw one of those locoed humans hurrying from the black mouth of the cave with a pail.

The man went down to the dry wash. And there his two companions joined him in a drink. This was the first sensible thing Don Ki-Yi had seen them do.

Then he saw the man climb to the cave again and bring out a pail of water for his burro. Next he saw him build a fire of sage sticks. After a while Don Ki-Yi's keen nose caught that scent which had never been particularly intriguing to him; the scent of coffee boiling.

Presently this was mingled with the far more soul-satisfying scent of frying bacon.

For a brief moment Don Ki-Yi was of half a mind to go snooping down there, but he thought better of it. That trap which had almost caught him had taught him a good lesson. The trail of a man is not the trail of a coyote. Ranch dogs could hang around men and follow them and worship them. But as for Don Ki-Yi, he decided that he was through.

He whisked off from the boulder, where he had been rendering his unappreciated aria, and headed up a winding gorge. The gorge led into the heart of the granite table lands, thence far away into the piñon forests of the Big Mesas.

There would be toothsome pronghorns and quail up there, and it was to that country that the disillusioned but complacent coyote beat his feather-light steps.

Don Ki-Yi was himself again.



She waited for them on the metal cliff

Tama of the Light Country

*Out of the black void of Space it came—the amazing message
from Mercury that told of a planet in chaos and of
a fearsome threat to the women of Earth*

By RAY CUMMINGS

Author of "The Fire People," "The Man Who Was Two Men," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

MYSTERIOUS night abductions of young women, centering about a summer camp in Maine, lead to the setting of a trap in which are killed two strange beings from another world—a gray-skinned, flabby-fleshed man, and an ethereally beautiful girl with great wings growing from her shoulders. She gasps out a dying warning, in English. One man escapes the trap.

Jack Dean, a reporter and news-broadcaster, is greatly attracted by Rowena Palisse, one of the girls at the camp. She arranges that he and his

aviator friend Jimmy Turk are taken with her aboard the Bolton "Flying Cube" designed by the great scientist, Dr. Grenfell. It is a gravity-conquering device, a fifty-foot cube using electrical principles; and Dr. Grenfell had planned to use it for a trip to the Moon, to look for Rowena's brother, Guy Palisse, who had started for there in a Space-rocket ten years before.

Dr. Grenfell's belief that the invasion was by men from Mercury is borne out when they go aloft in the Flying Cube to capture a meteor-like cylinder from Space, which contains a message

This story began in the Argosy for December 13.

from Guy Palisse. He had gone astray, and ended up on Mercury.

Guy Palisse tells how the sunward face of Mercury, the Light Country, is inhabited by highly intelligent people. The women have wings; but the men, to keep them submissive, cut off their wings at marriage. There had long been resentment on the part of the virgins against this mutilation; and it had recently flared up in open revolt led by the beautiful Tama, a Mercutian Joan of Arc. Meantime the outlaws of the Dark Country, led by a banished rebel Croat, are planning a revolution, working through Croat's son Roc, who is high in the government of the Light Country.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST MURDER.

I WAS sitting alone in my bedroom in the Hill City, the capital of the Light Country (went on Guy Palisse's amazing message), one evening after the last meal of that day-cycle, when Tama's brother Toh arrived to see me. My room, with workshop adjoining it, lay buried in a dark gloomy labyrinth of passages beneath the ruler's palace. The half-mile long artificial lake was near by. Water draining off the hillsides of the circular valley walls came down the vertical streets in open conduits and into the lake for the city's water supply. It drained from the lake in a wide, swift-flowing flume which penetrated the hill in a tunnel and spilled the surplus water outside the city.

The flume ran just above my subterranean room. I could always hear the vague murmur of the flowing water, especially after the rain of a black storm, surging with a lashing roar.

A storm seemed impending this evening. The normal daylight was gone. Heavy clouds were gathering close overhead, slowly circling in a lofty wind, the presage of a black storm. With evening of the cycle, darkness fell upon the city, as dark as I remember it on an overcast, stormy night of Earth. But there was no surface wind. A heavy, steaming, oppressive stillness; and a lurid green sheen in the air. A sinister portent of evil, came always with these Mercutian storms; and sometimes it was justified.

The storms whirled sometimes from the Fire Country, with a fetid, fiery, blasting breath. Or again, from the Cold Country of eternal blackness, with a sullen roar and a congealing cold.

With the darkness, the emergency lamps of the city winked on. A weirdness settled upon everything. The streets lay black with shadow, green-cast with the gathering murk.

But in my underground room none of this was apparent. I was sitting in the little chair which I had built in Earth-fashion when Toh knocked upon my door-slide, and I bade him enter. He stood before me; the light from my animal-fat lamp flickered with its yellow glow upon him.

"Guy, I have been sent to you by Tama."

A slim, slender little fellow, this Mercutian youth of twenty-one. High class, of pure Light Country blood—not squat and thick-set like most Mercutian men who so often have Cold Country native blood in their heritage. He was some five feet two inches in height, slim and straight and boyish. He wore his thick black hair long to the base of his neck. A ribbon of red was about his forehead.

With his high-bridged nose, he

looked something like a North American Indian youth. But except for his face and head the resemblance ended. His short-sleeved jacket flared at the waist. His wide trousers were knee-length, with a gaudy sash and dangling tasseled cord.

And in the sash I saw a knife handle sticking up.

"Toh, you have no right to wear that. Especially in the darkness of a coming storm. Suppose one of Roc's men should seize you!"

"No one will—seize me." He was panting, out of breath. He gazed furtively around my little room. "No one saw me come. The storm, it upsets the city. I came by your lower passage under the palace. The guard there was gone." He tried to smile—it was a strange smile indeed. "Or maybe in the darkness he did not see me."

"WHY do you come?"

"Tama wants you."

"Wants me?"

"Yes. Now. To come with me—to her. Will you?"

"Where?"

He gestured. "Out of the city. But near. We can most easy get there—in what you call half an hour."

"But—"

"I cannot answer questions." There was a hurried tenseness about him. And a pleading, "Guy—Tama asks you to come."

"All right," I agreed. "Toh, how is the storm?"

"Just the same. Not upon us yet."

"Maybe it won't break. I hope not."

"Do you?" he responded vaguely.

"I don't know about that."

He was waiting impatiently for me to get on my shoes. Resilient-soled buskins suitable for running over the jagged metallic rocks. For the rest, I

wore only short fabric trousers and a white, sleeveless shirt. In the heat of Mercury the costume was all I ever needed.

Toh gestured at the white shirt. "Have you no dark one? They can see you, maybe, in that."

I changed it.

He said suddenly, "Have you a weapon?"

"You know I have not. None are available outside the sealed government rooms."

"We could not get in there?"

"Of course not."

"Well, then—" His voice trailed away.

I was ready. Bareheaded, like himself; and I tied a band about my forehead to keep the hair from my eyes. I recalled suddenly that twelve years before, in a very similar costume to this I had run my college races back in the old days on Earth. That sent a pang through me. I was no more than a prisoner here on this strange world. In all its affairs, there was for me only Tama.

"All right, Toh."

But he insisted. "Take a knife—like this." He waved his thin, keen-edged blade. "You have one?"

"Yes. But, Toh—"

"Please. Tama asked that you hurry."

I got my knife and we started out through the hundred-foot vaulted corridor sloping upward. The murmur of the flume-water near by was audible as we crept forward. The guard at the gate was not there. We slipped through the small opening; its bars stood wide; we reached the open air.

We were just beyond the palace garden wall. The reservoir lake showed its dim expanse of water, unrippled in the breathless darkness. Behind us

loomed the government building. It should have been almost dark at this hour of sleep, but it was not. Many of its window slits were lighted.

Toh pulled at me. "Come."

But I lingered. Some instinct.

The trees arched overhead, great, spreading, spindly branches of the lush, porous vegetation of Mercury which grows with miraculous speed wherever there is soil and water. Through the tree branches I could see the luminous green haze of the sky. And near by, spreading around us, was the circular city. Mere dots of light now, winking like eyes in the murky, abnormal darkness of the coming storm.

"Guy, please come."

SUDDENLY I saw, not fifteen feet from us, a dark form lying on the ground. I jerked from Toh's grip and with a single bound pounced upon it.

It was the guard. He lay on his back; his heavy-jowled face a contorted mask, his eyes staring. And on his chest, his thin leather shirt was ripped with a hole. There was a dark stain of blood.

Toh gripped me again. "Yes, I killed him! He tried to stop me from getting in to you! Roc ordered you kept a prisoner—until this is over."

"This—what?" I shook him. "Toh, see here—murder! Good God, lad!"

He was shaking from fear or excitement. "Guy, now that you see him, help me carry him. I tried it. He's too heavy for me."

He added, almost with a stark whisper: "Guy, the first murder! I did it! This is for Tama. All this—for Tama and the virgins."

A surprising, matured force came to him. "Guy, my friend, is it with me you want to act? With me and Tama?

Or with Roc? He had you prisoner, in there to-night."

He broke off; we both stood listening. The city was in a turmoil; the distant murmur of voices in the streets; and nearer to us, voices at the palace doorways, in the garden—coming this way!

I cast my lot then.

"You mean, throw him in the flume, Toh?"

"Yes. I wanted to do that."

I lifted the body in my arms. The twenty-foot wide flume passed near us. I lowered my grisly burden gently into it to avoid a splash. There was blood on my shirt as I straightened.

"Gone, Toh."

The floating shape disappeared in the darkness.

There were voices at the garden wall, but we had not been seen. And then the first surge of the black storm broke upon the city. A sigh of hot wind stirred the fronds over us into a rustle. It rippled the mirror-like surface of the little lake.

A hot, sulphurous breath. Overhead the green-black sky was shot with luminous red streaks, and puffs of red like tiny silent bombs bursting. And then, a moment later, came the dull staccato sounds of the thunder.

"It's on us, Toh."

We ran around the lake shore, circled its farther end, and plunged into one of the city streets.

CHAPTER VII.

REVOLT OF THE WINGED VIRGINS.

IT was a run of some two miles across the level of the city to where the street began the ascent of the inner slope of the valley-side. A street like a wide road, with verdure over it,

sometimes interlocking overhead; and low stone houses, set back in gardens or small cultivated patches of field.

The emergency street lights were not adequate. It was dark everywhere; dark and confused. People were in the street, or gathered before their dwellings, apprehensive of the coming storm. But I saw it was more than that — an excitement at something transpiring.

No one heeded us as we dashed along. I had to measure my pace for Toh. With my giant leaps, I could at once have outdistanced him.

A city cart passed us, drawn by a gruesome, insect-like *brue*, a giant jointed thing. I heard a girl crying within the cart.

There were many girls flying about. Like huge, aimless frightened birds, they flapped overhead. We passed a house with one of Roc's official carts standing before it. His yellow-jacketed guards were lined at the garden wall — gray-skinned, heavy, dull-featured men from the Cold Country. The *brue* in the cart harness stretched its jointed length at ease along the ground and lifted its head with an uncanny pseudo-human movement as though listening.

And from the house came the screams of a girl.

"Toh! What is happening?"

But Tama's brother urged me to the other side of the street. We passed the house unnoticed by the guards. But I think that the *brue* was aware of me. Its head turned, with bristling, waving antennæ.

Toh panted, "Faster, Guy. I can — go faster."

We climbed the hill, passed the last of the houses. I carried Toh in my arms for a little way so that he might recover his breath. We reached the top of the cliff. Naked metal crags up

here. The valley of the city lay stretched beneath us. Lights were moving everywhere. The forms of flying girls — a party of them went over us, their great wings waving as they breasted the wind, their draperies flowing behind them.

The naked, rolling waste of the uplands lay before us. The lurid sky hung close overhead. The wind was increasing. Soon the rain would come.

"Which way, Toh?"

"Near here."

We attained a near-by eminence, half a mile or so from the city rim, a level space of jagged, broken crags. The city was hidden from here. Boulders lay strewn about. Rifts yawned like black gashes in a wild confusion of metal rock. The smooth places gleamed like burnished copper in the brief red lightning-flares of the storm. It was an inferno of glare and crackling thunder-puffs.

Toh gasped throatily: "Let us — wait here."

We crouched in a hollow of an arching rock-spire. Then Tama came. She had been waiting near by, and saw us arrive. She came soaring from overhead — a dark blob against the red sky.

Toh gripped me. "There she is!"

Her body hung breast down. Her ten-foot spread of wings tilted, swayed as she circled, balancing, descending. She fluttered down, her feet dropping, her wings flapping backward as she righted herself to land on tiptoe before us.

"Guy — you came! I was afraid that Toh could not get in to you."

IT was brighter up here than down in the city. The red sky painted

Tama's deep-red feathered wings a lurid crimson. They were folded now as she stood before us, arching from

her shoulder blades, with their tips just clearing the ground behind her.

She wore the usual silky gray-blue trousers, bound at her ankles; her bare feet were encased in sandals, with gold cords crossing her instep and fastened to the lower trouser hem. And a silken, gray-blue scarf wound about her waist, crossing in front, passing up over her breast and shoulders, crossing again between the wings behind and descending to the waist.

Her hair was a glossy black. It covered her ears; and its two long thick plaits were laced tightly with silken cords. They came forward over each shoulder; each was fastened to her body in two places—at the waist, and again where the plait ended, at the outside of her trouser leg, just at the knee.

"Guy—"

I noticed that from her belt a knife handle protruded. I seized her outstretched hands.

"Tama, what is going on to-night? This turmoil—?"

Several inches shorter than Toh, she stood like a child before me. But there was nothing of the child in her swift vehement words. Nor in the flash of her dark eyes, the set of her jaw.

"Guy, I have need to question you. Quickly. Please, will you answer?"

I held her hands and stood gazing down at her upturned face. The red sheen of the storm deepened its flush.

"Yes," I said.

"You know not—you know nothing of the events of the two day-cycles past. To-day—yesterday—Roc has held you really a prisoner."

"That I did not know, Tama. I did not realize—"

"No," she retorted cynically, "because you had work; no need to go out. But yesterday I sent Toh to try and get you. They would not let him in. And

the things that are transpiring in the city—"

A vision of Roc rose before me. His hawk-like gray face; his long black hair, shot with white for all his youth, streaming over his ears. His leer as he assigned the work that I was to do, and told me to proceed with the completion of my rocket-cylinder.

Tama demanded abruptly, "Guy, can you get control of any weapons?"

"No."

"What weapons are there? We girls know nothing of such things. But you, in your work—"

There are no weapons used in the Light Country of the sort which on Earth would be called modern. Explosives are unknown. There are knives, and feathered arrows flung with a sling. And several devices for longer range, mostly of the catapult principle. Crude, mechanical things.

But I understood that the government had small electronic weapons, and defensive electro-armament. There is an electro-magnetic current known to the Light Country scientists. I suppose it is something akin to what is called electricity on Earth. But I had never seen the weapons developed from it.

"They are all sealed in the storehouse, Tama, under the palace. They keep an arsenal there in case of need—an attack of savages from the Fire Country, or a revolt of the Cold Country slaves."

That last word affected her strangely. "Revolt—of slaves. Ah, yes!" A murmured, tense bitterness. Then she added, "Could you get in there?"

"No, I don't believe so."

"Have you ever been in the arsenal?"

"Let me see—yes, once, years ago."

She thought a moment. The rain

was starting, big, splattering drops. The wind was steadily increasing, and growing hotter now; this storm was whirling down upon us from the Fire Country.

TAMA drew me closer under the overhanging rock. Toh crouched with us. He said abruptly, "There was once a long-range ray. My father told me of it."

Again a vision of Roc rose jeeringly at me. It was Roc who originally had told me of this high-powered ray, a lost and almost forgotten weapon. Centuries ago, the Light Country civilization had reached a higher peak than now. There had been many wars with the neighboring savages of the hotter and colder regions. With these declining and the population of Mercury steadily decreasing, the Light Country began to turn primitive. The ray was lost now in the dim pages of history. It was almost a legend handed down from generation to generation.

Tama said, "What sort of a ray?"

I answered, "An electronic ray-projector. The ray-current itself is known. I think the government has small hand projectors. The lost mechanism was for long range. Very high-powered. A death-ray."

Roc had smiled very strangely at me when he described what the ray must have been.

Toh put in again: "They are trying to discover that lost ray, in the government workshops."

"Yes," I agreed.

"But it is not ready now?" Tama interjected.

"I think not."

"Then we cannot get it—nor can it be used against us. You cannot get any other weapons, Guy?"

"No. Tama, these questions—you

must tell me what—" I gripped her. "Tama, child, this turmoil to-night—?"

"I will tell you what is the meaning of this turmoil, as you call it."

I listened, amazed by her vehement, passionate words. For months past, the virgins of the Hill City had been refusing marriage—isolated instances of rebellion. I knew that, of course. But what I did not know was that two days ago, news had spread about the city of a law which Roc was proposing to the Government Council. That law had been passed this morning. And they were starting to put it into effect to-night.

"Forcing us into marriage, Guy! No longer now can we keep our wings until we take a husband."

They were clipping the wings of every girl over sixteen years of age in the city.

"So we will have no reason to refuse marriage, since we are mutilated anyway."

I thought of Roc's official cart as I had seen it before that house. And the girl screaming inside.

The city was in chaos. The girls had had two days' warning. There had been plans—preparations. The thing that they had been contemplating for months under Tama's leadership was now forced upon them.

"We are going, Guy! Open rebellion now. Two thousand virgins—I think we can get that many."

A FLIGHT—an exodus of the marriageable young girls from the Hill City. There are five other large cities in the Light Country. The girls in them would soon come also. All day the word had been circulating. This black storm aided them in escaping. A preliminary rendezvous had

been determined—a hundred miles or so off in the metallic barren desert toward the central Fire Country.

Even now the girls were flying there, singly, in groups, slipping from their homes—seeking out friends to tell them also—winging away from the Hill City into the lurid, storm-filled gloom.

"And we have built little platforms," Tama was saying. "With handles, so that the girls can fly with them. We're taking the victims—the few we can gather who have already been mutilated this night. Guy, when you see the poor things! Their wings, once so beautiful, with the feathers clipped and plucked—the muscles cut—the blood streaming—"

Toh said suddenly: "I killed a man to-night."

She seemed not to hear him. I had leaped to my feet, pulling her with me. She stood now, clinging to me. And she was suddenly trembling.

"We—I want you, Guy. Want you with us. I will take you on one of the little platforms. We will hide—off in the desert. We are going permanently, Guy. Two thousand of us. And there will be others come to join us. We've got to do it! There is nothing left now. We'll find soil. Some little hidden valley where we can build shelters and grow food. There is nothing else left for us to do!"

She silenced my questions with her tumult of words: "Will you come? We need you—we are not such fools that we do not realize a man can fight for existence in the desert better than girls. There is Toh—and a few other young men are coming. A little band of you men to help—to lead us."

She ended with a wild appeal, "You of the great Earth who know so much—and yet you know so little of how

the virgins of Mercury feel about their wings! Guy, will you come?"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FLYING PLATFORMS.

WHEN she paused, I said abruptly, "Yes, I'll come."

And I stood watching her as she walked to the brink of the jagged eminence. She faced the rolling naked landscape, a dark blur out there in the murk of the storm. It was raining heavily now—hot rain that slanted down on the wind in great sheets.

The turgid green of the sky caught the raindrops and turned them to emeralds, and to rubies when the lightning flashed in puffs like crimson bombs. One seemed to explode directly over us. The report was deafening; the crimson glare blinding.

Tama stood with upraised arms and her crimson feathered wings outstretched. In the lightning her figure showed clearly.

A signal. And in a moment it was answered. From some other rocky point near by two blobs rose into the air. They came soaring, swooping. Two rectangular platforms with girls flying beside them, carrying them. They came with a rush, swept by the wind; turned and steadied over our heads.

I gazed up, and a distant lightning flare illumined them clearly. One was a small platform, possibly twelve feet by six. Three long, flexible poles were fastened crosswise under its bottom and bound with vine-strands. The poles, some eighteen feet long, thus extended out each side about six feet.

At each of these handles a girl was flying. Six to the smaller platform,

three on each side. I saw that the other platform was similar, save that it was several times larger, with sixteen girls bearing it.

They turned into the wind and with a great flapping of wings settled down to the rocks near us. The smaller platform was empty. Upon the larger, perhaps a dozen girls were lying. I went over and gazed at them, standing silent while Tama told them that I had joined the flight. They lay huddled, clinging to the low railing that outlined the platform.

A lump rose in my throat at their strained white faces. Some of them shifted their positions, trying to hide from me the white bandages, blood-stained, with which their mutilated wings were bound. The platform carrying them was presently back in the air. We watched it as it fled off into the face of the storm, off away from the city toward the wilds of the Fire Country. A moment, and then the lurid murk swallowed it.

"Come, Guy. I will ride with you and with Toh."

Toh took his place on the platform; he gestured to me. My mind was confused, whirling with all Tama had told me—the shock of this catastrophe.

Then the confusion fell from me. I stopped, stood a moment in thought. And questions rushed at me.

I faced Tama. "Did that platform start for your distant meeting place?"

"Yes! Yes, Guy."

"And now you want to take Toh and me there?"

"Yes. All is ready."

"But is it?"

"Yes."

I knew vaguely the locality the girls had selected.

"There is no valley with soil off there, Tama."

"No. But I had to select some place that all the girls knew. We have often met there in little groups—to try and plan what we might do."

"And because you have done that before," I said, "Roc probably knows the place. He'll follow. Did you think of that?"

She had not. But it was too late now to change. Every moment girls were leaving the city.

"On foot," Toh said, "Roc and his men cannot get there in less than two day-cycles. More, in this storm. The cañons will be river-torrents."

It was true enough. The ferocity of the storm here on the exposed height where we stood, was only too apparent. The wind tore at us. The rain-sheet beat and drenched us.

"COME," I said. "No more of this." I realized that the wind was tearing at our almost shouted words. I took my place on the platform. "Tell your girls to circle over the city, Tama."

She stared at me. "But, Guy—"

"I'll explain as we go. And I must know more about your plans. It will be death—out there in the desert—without every possible safeguard."

She gave the order. We rose into the wind. The light platform swayed and bucked. The girls struggled with it. For a time I thought they would lose control. They had had little practice; the wind caught us, bore us away despite their struggling wings. Then they pulled more evenly, turned us, held us soaring. Then they turned again; and more steadily this time, we swept upon the heels of the wind, out over the circular valley.

The lights of the storm-lashed city gleamed a thousand feet beneath us. Down all the inclined streets the water

was pouring. The little lake by the palace showed its surface lashed by the wind.

I crouched by Tama. "Tell me, quickly, what preparations for food and equipment you have made."

They were surprisingly complete. It was obvious that there was no way by which we could now improve them.

We crossed over the city, and turned back while she told me.

"Our plan, Guy, is to gather at this meeting place. And when we are all there and the storm is past, we can find a suitable valley with soil."

There were girls rising occasionally from the city. One passed near us. I said abruptly, "Tama, call her."

She obeyed at once. And for all my ten years on Mercury, the action gave me a start. She stood up on our tiny, tilting platform; and I had the sudden absurd shock of fear that she would fall—a thousand feet down into the city under us.

"Tama, you—"

I choked it back, as she spread her wings and leaped into the void. Followed the other girl. Called to her. And the two came winging back to us.

This other was a girl hardly sixteen. She gazed at me and smiled to know that I would help them.

"Tama," I demanded, "how many young men are coming?"

"Twenty. Thirty, perhaps. The platform bearing them should be gone by now."

It occurred to me that Roc, if he had wind of this, could so easily place a spy among those men.

"You think you can trust them all?"

"Yes. We thought of that. They all have been in sympathy with us for months."

"Are there any others?"

"Other young men?"

"Yes. Who would come—but have not heard of this?"

"Many others," she said.

"You know who they are?"

"Oh, yes. I have been testing them—talking to them, with caution, for a long time back."

"Then tell this girl who they are. She is under sixteen, isn't she?"

"Yes."

"Then Roc's men will not bother her. This new law does not touch her."

The girl listened eagerly while Tama translated. She was to stay in the city for a day or two, and find other girls of her age who would spread the word.

"Gather all the young men she can trust—tell her that, Tama. Have you any other platforms down there?"

"Yes. Lina knows where they are hidden."

The girl nodded when this was told her. There would be other girls in a day or two who would be wanting to leave. And there were fifty or more waiting now to gather the victims of Roc's first execution of the new law, and bring them on platforms.

The girl left us and dropped back into the city.

TAMA asked me, "Now, Guy, shall we start away? I do not want to tire our girls, flying here in this wind and rain, with the long flight before them."

"Presently, Tama. Circle around a moment more."

I had been studying the situation beneath us. One does not relinquish his native world without a struggle. My rocket-cylinder was down there, in my workshop under the palace. It was practically ready for operation. The small cylinder with its mechanisms was ready. I could, I felt sure, even

unaided and alone in the desert, find means to load its firing chambers, and launch it. I had been living for ten years upon the hope of communicating with Earth.

And now it came to me clearly that even more important than my own desire to send a message to Earth was the fact that it might be the best thing to do for these girls. I saw myself now their logical leader. The responsibility for their safety would rest with me. And we were burning our bridges. This rebellion, this flight was an irrevocable step. The government, dominated by Roc, would never compromise.

We might be followed by the Light Country army, found, assailed. Or if not that, then there could be starvation in the desert, or death from savages or the strange fearsome animals that lurked in the Fire Country.

As though with prophetic vision I could see us embattled. And I knew that every one of these virgins would choose death before she would return beaten and yield her wings to the mutilating knife, to marry and bear girl children, perhaps, to suffer the same.

I said abruptly, "Tama, I'm going down and get my cylinder. We may have need to send a message to the Earth."

I told her why. There was no argument. Both she and Toh could see it.

"I killed a man to-night," said Toh, and turned his white face to his sister as he told her how he had killed the guard to get me out. "We are in this—there is no returning."

I had been pondering how I could best land and get to my room unseen. I knew that Roc would stop me, seize me if he could. The opened gateway and the vanished guard had perhaps by now been discovered, along with my own escape.

We were now almost directly over the flat roof of the palace. The simplest way to get to my rooms was from the lake, over the wall into the garden, through the corridor gate—the way Toh and I had come out. But I saw, as a flare illumined the scene, that there were figures down there. Not at the gateway, but so near it that Tama could not land this platform unobserved anywhere in that vicinity. And the trees would make a ground landing very difficult and precarious in this wind, almost anywhere on the city level.

But the flat roof of the palace seemed empty. It would take only a moment to touch the roof. I could leave the platform and it could at once dart away. Even if it were seen from below, it could not be assailed so quickly. Probably no one would realize that I had left it. And from the roof, I would take my chances on getting down through the palace unseen.

"Then we will wait for you on the roof, Guy?"

"No! You girls would be seen. It would cause comment, and they would come up after you."

I thought I had a quick way of getting out of the city. I told her where to meet me with the platform, in a secluded place well away from the city.

She gazed at me sharply when I described the place.

"I can get there," I smiled. "You forget, I am more agile than the Mercutian men. The whole thing will take no more than half an hour—if I have luck."

WE were dropping toward the roof. Its flat top was a little lake of water with the rain pouring on it and gathering there. The men outside the palace saw us as we

came down. There was no doubt of that. The red puffs in the sky were almost continuous now. The glare showed us clearly; and I saw the men staring up at us.

Half a dozen of the official carts were coming up to the main doorway of the building, the *brues* drawing them through the water on the roadway. Girls were being taken from the carts and shoved roughly into the palace. One went fighting. Her cries floated up to us through the surge of the storm.

We landed on the rain-soaked roof with a splash.

"I am going with you," Toh said suddenly.

"No. I can manage it better alone. If I meet any one, he may not necessarily know that Roc had me imprisoned. Hurry now, get this platform away. I'll be there, Tama, in half an hour."

The platform lifted. One of the girls had already shown signs of tiring. Tama took her place.

I crouched in the water by the roof palisade, watching the platform sweep away. From the ground the roof-top was invisible. I thought no one had seen me land.

I waited a few moments. Then I went to the hooded trap, opened it, and descended the ladder into the palace.

CHAPTER IX.

MADMAN'S GAMBLE.

THE upper story was dim and silent. But sounds came floating up the central spiral. And the dragging tread of the Mercutians downstairs. I stood at the head of the spiral. No one was on it—no one in sight. It seemed as good a time as any.

I got down to the main floor, and unexpectedly ran into a man.

"Ah, it is you, Palisse. They are rebellious, these idiot girls. Listen to them."

He spoke his native language. He gestured to a near-by room-arch. "Listen, Palisse. Roc puts the new order at once into effect."

"Yes," I said. I had pushed past him. Evidently in the dimness of this foyer he had not noticed that I was drenched with rain, nor had he seen that I was coming from the roof-top. He went past me and disappeared.

From a near-by room came the sounds of gruff men's voices; the terrified murmurs of girls. A low moan, then a scream.

I did not linger. From the direction of the main doorway another party was bringing more girls. I moved away toward the incline leading downward, and reached the underground level. There seemed no one down here—just a dim candlestick in a bracket bowl.

I reached the inner door-slide of my apartment. It stood ajar. I could not remember that I had left it ajar. Perhaps I had. Roc had been keeping me a prisoner, but he had not let me know it. Instead of sealing this inner door upon me, he had doubtless put a guard near by, to turn me back if I tried to leave my rooms.

But the guard evidently was not here now. I hastened into my rooms. The doorway opened directly into my bedroom. The place seemed undisturbed. It was not so long since Toh and I had left here. My single light was still burning. The door-slide to the lower corridor-exit was closed. I recalled distinctly that Toh and I had closed it after us.

In the silence as I stood an instant upon entering, I could hear the sound

of the flume-water outside, vicious now, an angry torrent swollen by the rain of the storm. I went into my workshop. My benches, shelves of chemicals, all my familiar apparatus stood in order.

I gathered the loading chambers of the rocket-cylinder, the fuses, the little coils of rotary magnetizers; and parchment sheets and etching pencils with which I could write a message. I could put them all into the cylinder's hollow interior, to keep them dry against the storm. Lastly, I collected the few chemicals needed to complete the apparatus. It would take me not over two or three days out there in the desert with the girls.

I piled all the articles on my center-bench. But when I turned to the box where I kept the cylinder itself, I found the cylinder missing!

It turned me cold. I stared into the little box, in the shadows of the room corner. It was empty. But I had left the cylinder there. I searched quickly.

It seemed that I heard a sound from my bedroom. I had entered with my knife in hand. The knife now lay on the center-bench. I seized it and rushed for the bedroom. In my frantic haste I stepped too briskly. The lesser gravity of Mercury was not enough to hold me down, and my head struck the eight-foot top of the connecting arch. It knocked me dizzy, but I regained my feet, and reeled into the bedroom.

The cylinder lay on my bed. And from behind the head-curtain Roc rose up to confront me!

"SO you came back, Palisse. What a luck for me! I need you."

I was still dizzy from the blow on my head. I stood wavering, and saw that he was backing away from

me, saw his grinning, leering face with the point of hair coming low on his forehead to give him a queer, Satanic look. His pointed ears came out from the locks of his hair as he listened.

Some one coming? I seemed to hear distant voices back in the lower passages of the palace.

"Where have you been, Palisse? In the rain?—well, that is evident."

His voice was unduly loud—trying to attract attention to us. He was backing behind my bed, and fumbling at his belt where I saw that he carried a small arrow-sling.

My head cleared. If I turned to close my door he would be on me. I said nothing. I was moving sidewise to avoid my table. And suddenly I leaped. I caught him at the bedpost. He had not got out his weapon. He twisted, seizing my hand that held the knife.

Together we swayed out into the room. The table went over, and my light with it. For a moment we fought in the darkness, both silent, panting, fighting grimly. I was far stronger than he. And there is a curious fragile quality to the Mercutians. But his fingers clung desperately to my hand that held the knife. And his other arm was around my neck.

We struck a chair and fell, still locked together. Suddenly he relinquished my wrist and his groping hand on the floor found the smashed table lamp. He flung it into my face; the hot fat burned me. My waving knife went wild.

The voices outside seemed nearer. I regained my feet, lifting Roc up, and with all my strength heaved his body away. It broke his hold. He crashed against the overturned table and lay still. There was just a little glow of light straggling in from the passage-

way. I could see Roc lying there in the wreck of the smashed table.

I did not stop to investigate. The congealing fat of the lamp smeared my burned face, and was in my eyes. I wiped it away, then caught up the cylinder from the bed—a two-foot, cylindrical metal contrivance.

I hastened into my workshop, stuffing the apparatus from the center-bench into the cylinder and closing it. In a moment I was out through the lower corridor doorway.

I went up the ascending passage almost at a run, the cylinder under one arm, and my knife in the other hand. There would be pursuit, I knew. I could already hear the voices back in my bedroom. Doubtless I had not killed Roc; perhaps he was only shamming as he fell.

The outer gate was ajar. I went through it, into the open air. The storm was raging as before. The red torrent of rain coming down; the trees here bending their porous branches like reeds in a wind.

I had hoped to be able to make off into the city without raising a cry after me. But the alarm was already given. A puff of lightning showed me my surroundings clearly: the garden wall curving behind me; the stretch of lake wall with the waves dashing over it; and the other side of the triangle, hemmed in by the metal flume. Its ten-foot depth was depressed into the ground, its sides rising only a foot or two. It passed quite near me. I caught a glimpse of its turgid whirl-current.

AN arrow sang past me as for an instant I stood undecided. At the gate out of which I had come, men appeared. They stood shouting. I could see that the way along the lake

was blocked by other men, who had heard the shouts, and now came running at me.

I was suddenly aware of a sound close behind me, a queer sloshing. I turned. A *brue* was slithering forward through the water and mud of the path. In the lurid half-light its eyes gleamed balefully. A gruesome thing, ten feet long. Its upraised head as it advanced was nearly the height of my own; its feelers, muscular arms the length of my body, with the strength to crush me, waved over its head.

The watchful insect was partly between me and the flume. There was an instant when I was confused. A *brue* could leap suddenly, swift as a coiled snake. I turned the other way, back toward the wall. Arrows came at me, but a gust caught them and flung them away. The men by the wall scattered as they thought I was about to rush them.

The turmoil was rising around me. Shouts from everywhere. Figures were approaching, it seemed, from every direction. I was caught, hemmed in. I saw a boulder lying under a tree, and seized it, raising it aloft—a tremendous chunk, but it was light to my strength here on this little world. I had shoved my knife back in my belt, but it was awkward to have to cling to the cylinder.

The *brue* did not leap, but with lowered head came slithering toward me. I heaved the rock with one hand. It caught the giant insect full in its gruesome, pseudo-human face, mashing it. The thing let out a shrill, horrible scream and lay quivering.

The men behind me seized this opportunity to advance. A thrown knife winged past my shoulder, tearing my shirt. I went with a twenty-foot leap over the writhing, crushed insect, and

reached the flume. Clinging to the cylinder, I plunged into the boiling, tumbling current and was swept away.

THE water was hot, with a heavy mist of vapor rising from it. I sank, with my plunge, but desperately held to the cylinder. In a moment I came up like a cork. But for all my buoyancy, it was difficult to keep my head above the surface. A chaos of spray and boiling, lashing water swept viciously down the incline of the flume. I could see dimly the smooth metallic sides rushing past me. Red puffs in the sky overhead illumined the sweep of passing tree branches.

I tried to swim, but could not. Momentarily I was under the surface; then up again, tumbling end over end, rolling—beaten against the rushing side of the flume when it turned a curve. The hermetically sealed cylinder, with the air inside it, floated high. It jerked and pulled to escape from me. Once it got away; but I lunged and caught it again.

It was two miles across the city to where the flume plunged into the cliff tunnel. It seemed unending, yet I must have made it with racing-flyer speed. Houses went by—dim shapes with lights in them, racing backward, momentarily visible over the flume edge. There was a great sweeping curve where the swollen torrent surged and slopped over the edge and I was very nearly flung over.

But presently I was able to keep my body from turning and to swim a little. Then I tried holding the cylinder before me like a buoy and kicking it forward. I got along better after that. The relief was short. The widening mouth of the tunnel entrance yawned out of the darkness ahead and swallowed me.

In the solid blackness I lost all track

of direction. I could not see the sides of the flume. There was nothing but the inky chaos of sounds. A roaring reverberation now. The beat of the waves against me. The thuds as I struck the flume-side and was hurled back into the center of the current.

A racing, tumbling black chaos. Then abruptly I saw the red lightning in the sky again. The cliff-wall opening swept backward. I was through the tunnel. In the open stormy night, outside the city valley. Naked rock spires were passing—

The flume abruptly ended. I was spilled out in a great cascade of water. The cylinder was torn from me. Rocks struck me. I felt myself rolling, tumbling on a rocky surface.

CHAPTER X.

BESIEGED IN THE METAL DESERT.

FOR an instant my senses must have faded. When they cleared, I was lying away from water, save the rain that beat upon me. And Tama and her brother were standing over me. The cylinder was unharmed. We found it lying on the rocks near by.

"You got it!" Toh exulted.

I was bruised and battered, half choked with water, but not injured. The platform was here. We mounted it, Tama, Toh and I crouching together with the precious cylinder held between us.

The girls lifted us; we struggled up into the night, circled the outside of the city valley, and headed out into the metal desert, toward the Fire Country. The storm seemed now to burst into the height of its fury. The whirling rotary clouds were at times close over us—green and red vapor masses, hurling rain and wind heavy with sulphur,

The clouds sometimes rifted into gigantic vertical funnels through which the clear daylight of the sky was visible. It brightened the scene. The bleak, desolate landscape beneath us was at moments clearly shown. Great rippled sheets of metallic plateau, drenched with water. Shining coppery; then cast with green—then blinding red when the lightning puffed. Or again a wild, broken area with spires and crags and boulders strewn as though some frenzied Titan had flung them.

And we swept over tiny valleys where soil had collected and trees and verdure had sprung up. The trees bent low in the wind; the rain-sheet blurred the vision of them as we struggled past.

It seemed unending. It would have been called a hundred miles on Earth. The storm abated a trifle or we could never have gone on. Tama relieved the girls to the limit of her strength—but Toh and I had to crouch there helpless.

Then the deep pit of the caldron valley, with jagged, upstanding buttes and spires towering over it, lay beneath us. Caves down there to give us shelter. A great shaft of green-red light came down from a rift in the tumbling clouds. It fell like a cathedral shaft and disclosed the mile-wide pit floor. The close-encircling walls offered a measure of protection from the wind. Girls were down there, flapping about. Platforms lay discarded. Figures of girls and a few men were dragging supplies and equipment into the nearby caves.

The meeting-place at last!

The light from the clouds held only a moment. Then it was gone. There was darkness in the little valley under us. We descended into it. There were five hundred or more girls here now. At intervals more straggled in.

The valley floor was naked metal rock, thickly studded with boulders. There was not a blade of vegetation; as I had anticipated, this was indeed no place where a permanent camp could be made.

But there were caves to give us shelter. In the dark confusion I located a dozen or so of the Hill Country young men. We got all the equipment sheltered underground. Meager supplies! A few knives for weapons. Agricultural implements. Food-bulbs and seeds. A little clothing and personal effects.

With my strength and activity, abnormal on this small world, I raised the equipment in great armfuls and staggered with it into the caves.

AS order gradually came out of the confusion, Tama and I began to feel that the situation was not quite as drastic as it had seemed at first. When the storm was over we could fly to find soil, and build houses there. We had what might be called some carpenters' tools, and the wood on Mercury is very porous, easy to work. In this lush soil, vegetation grows rapidly. In a dozen day-cycles, with favorable weather, some of the food would be ready for harvesting. We had enough food with us now, with luck, to last that long.

The caves, most of them, communicated. It was presently a weird enough scene in there. Animal-fat lamps spluttering with flickering yellow light. And there were some blue-green bulbs—small battery affairs of the electro-current which a few of the girls had been able to secure.

For hours, while the storm raged, the girls struggled in. Presently we had a thousand—I suppose that many; there was no way of counting them.

Some were from the City of the Water, the second largest settlement of the Light Country.

"The word has spread there," said Tama. We were in the cave which I had rigged for myself. Already I had started preparing my chemicals for the charging of the cylinder. Tama added, "Every virgin in the Light Country will join us in time. Except those . . . unable to fly."

Some of the mutilated girls with us now were in pitiable condition. The exposure to the storm, the chill of the wind, the rain-soaked platforms upon which for so many hours they had lain inactive, had given them cold. Fever was attacking them.

We got some sleep. We prepared meals of a sort. I tried to arrange some form of organization by which with concerted, planned effort the necessary work of existing might be performed.

That night-cycle passed and the next day began. Day and night were alike in the darkness of the black storm. The rain fell in an almost continuous down-pour. The wind surged and sang around the naked pinnacles that towered over the valley. The puffs of lightning came at intervals. Within our caves it was only a distant turmoil, but outside it was an inferno of raging angry nature.

I posted the young men as guards at the cave-mouths where they could see across the caldron. It was about a mile in diameter, a pit depressed a hundred feet or so below the level of the surrounding plateau uplands. The rim was broken with gullies and ravines and studded with pinnacles like great pointed church spires. The caves we had chosen were all close together at the bottom of one wall.

As one stood at the cave-mouths, all

was a green lurid murk outside. The wind came only in fitful, crazy gusts down here at the caldron bottom. The opposite valley wall could be dimly seen, its rim outlined against the turgid sky. Then a lightning puff would momentarily redden everything with its glare.

I had my chemical reactions well under way. We expected every hour that the storm would abate. I was preparing to write this narrative, an appeal to Earth. Dr. Grenfell once said to me that within ten years he and his associates would conquer the secret of space-navigation. I hoped that might by now have been accomplished.

Two day-cycles passed. Again the storm lulled, but it still hung threatening. We had just had an evening meal in our cave, when one of the young men guards came rushing in. He knew a little English but he forgot it now. He called excitedly to Tama.

She sprang to her feet. There was a flutter around the dim cave, for a dozen or more of the girls were here with us. Tama whirled on me.

"They've come, Guy! Roc's men are here!"

Before I could stop them, several of the girls ran, half-flying, out of the cave-mouth. I rushed out, calling after them. The rain had ceased. The valley floor held black pools of water between the boulder masses. The sky overhead was brighter; slow, funnel clouds with green shafts piercing them.

On the upper rim I saw the figures of skulking men. Roc's pursuing band had found us! Our girls came fluttering from the caves to gaze up at them.

"Inside!" I called. "Tama, get them inside!"

It was too late! A group of them had run into an open space. From

above, a long winged arrow came sailing down. Tama shouted. But the arrow caught one of the scattering girls. She fell on the rocks with the arrow sticking up from her back.

FROM then, it was open warfare. How little we had intended it! All that day men were appearing in greater numbers up there on the rim-top. They did not dare come down, apparently, but were content to camp up there in the upper crags and harry us. We did not know if Roc was here besieging us or not.

Nor how many men were here.

They tried to open communication with us. I was in favor of it, but the infuriated girls refused. A last platform had arrived from the Hill City, with a few young men and nearly twenty mutilated girls on it. Roc's men flung a rain of arrows and sling-shot stones at it as it came down. Two of the girls were killed.

But down below we were more wary now; we kept cautiously within the caves whenever the sky was bright. The storm still clung around. Then there came a period when the sky was black as night again. We added to our guards; it seemed not unlikely that Roc would take advantage of the blackness and come down.

The thought of that gave me an idea. If Roc were up there with these men, why could I not prowl out and seize him? I told Tama and Toh the idea.

"If we could capture him, hold him as hostage—threaten his life—"

We could make him disperse this band. I desperately wanted them to be gone; they would hamper me, perhaps could even stop me from launching the cylinder. And when we were ready to fly from here, some of the girls undoubtedly would be killed by their

arrows. There were many of the girls now who wanted to fly out in force and try to drive Roc's men away. But I was obdurate against it. These young girls, flying, armed with knives, to enter into deadly combat! It was unthinkable.

But Tama and I might prowl quietly out into this blackness and bring Roc back with us. I hardly planned how it might be done; some fortunate chance—

Toh wanted to go, but I would not let him. Tama could fly; and I, an Earth-man, had unusual strength and agility.

We started with a knife and a small electro-torch in each of our belts. We picked our way slowly out to the floor of the valley. It was like the blackest of nights on Earth, save that there was that queer green-yellow sheen on the clouds. The wind swirled overhead, but there was no rain.

Tama walked beside me, with her wings occasionally flapping slowly.

"We must keep together," I whispered. "When we get near the top, I'll wait, while you fly around."

"Yes, Guy."

"But keep out over the valley. If they fire at you, fly back down."

We arranged light flashes by which we could call each other if desired. We passed the line of cave mouths, splashing in the pools of water which lay on the valley bottom. Then we began to climb. No lights were showing on the rim overhead; it seemed that Roc's men were back from the brink, in cave openings perhaps.

CLIMBING was not difficult for me. With my weight less than half what it was on Earth, and my strength of muscle the same, I could leap up this ascent with ease.

And to Tama it was nothing. She flew from one crag, upward to the next, and waited for me to arrive.

There was a place where we had to cross a transverse ravine. It was too broad for me to leap with safety—sixty feet, perhaps.

Tama whispered, "Hold me, Guy."

I put an arm about her thighs; and as I crouched under her wings, we leaped together. She could almost sustain me—we fluttered over the ravine and landed scrambling but unhurt, on its opposite, lower brink.

She was laughing softly. "We get along very well . . . Look there!"

Her tone changed abruptly. We crouched among the rocks, gazing up to where the valley rim showed black against the storm-sky.

A dark shape! It sailed slowly across the little valley, a thousand feet up. An oblong shape. Tiny lights were on it. A flying vehicle! Its small headlight ray was searching the plateau up there as though seeking a landing place. It passed over the rim and vanished.

That was the first I knew that a flying vehicle existed on Mercury. We could see now, behind the rim-top, the answering signal-beams of Roc's men.

It took us all of an hour to locate the flyer and get near it. But at last, without raising an alarm, we reached its vicinity. It had come down on the plateau perhaps a mile from the caldron-valley, concealed from the caves by an upstanding line of buttes. The figures of Roc's men on the upper plateau unwittingly guided us. Their small hand lights showed, as they picked their way along the broken rocky upland toward where the vehicle had landed.

Tama and I made a wide detour, ten miles to one side at least. Scrambling, running, flying, we made good speed.

Was this vehicle from the Hill City? Bringing Roc, perhaps, to join his men and plan what they were to do with the insurgent virgins? The scientists of the Hill City had never really admitted me into their secret activities. Flying vehicles had once been used on Mercury; had this one been reconstructed from the lost secrets of history?

We reached it at last, a great metal bird lying on the rocks. We crouched on the top of a butte, overlooking it. There were lights on its deck and in its portes. And hand lights showed a crowd of Roc's men swarming around it outside.

As I gazed, I got another shock. This was more than a mere flying vehicle; it was a space-ship! Its convex panes, the dome like a transparent bell over its deck, bore evidence to that. A ship from another planet? From Earth?

My heart leaped. But the hope was at once dispelled. Men showed, working under the bell of the forward deck. It was bright under there; we were not far away, gazing almost directly down upon them, for the ship lay close against our wall of rock. They were Mercutians, not Earth-men.

Tama whispered, "Those are Cold Country men! This thing is not from the Hill City."

Then we saw Roc approaching. A chance beam from the ship struck him and clung. He stopped and waved his arms. From the deck of the ship, where a porte in the dome had been rolled back, a gigantic figure answered his greeting.

WE had relinquished hope of capturing Roc now. With all these men here, and in the glow of light, it would have been too desperate an attempt. We watched Roc approach

the ship, dispersing his men while he climbed aboard and met the giant figure on the deck. We could see them greet each other; then they turned and went into the ship's interior.

A moment later a light in a lower porte of the hull flashed on. It seemed to suggest that Roc and this giant were down there in a cabin.

"Tama, if we could get down there—hear what they're saying!"

It seemed barely possible. The cabin porte faced the butte wall which was perhaps twenty feet away. The portehole was low in the hull—only a few feet above the rocks on which the ship rested. There seemed none of Roc's men down there; they were all on the other side.

We approached the brink. It was about a hundred-foot drop from where we stood.

"Can you lower us, Tama?"

"Yes."

If we were not seen! It was fairly dark, but there was a reflected glow from the ship.

"Hold tight, Guy."

I put my arms around her. We stepped off the brink. My head was at her waist, my arms about her thighs, my body dangling lower than hers to be out of the way of her wings. She struggled, flapping with all her strength to check our fall.

There was a wind moaning around this naked rock-butte. The wall slid up past us; the ship seemed coming up. We dropped into the twenty-foot wide space, fluttering, scrambling.

My feet struck the ground. The impact was not too severe. We fell in a heap, but unhurt. The porte stood open, quite near us. Voices sounded.

We found a place where we could both see and hear. We were in a glow of light, but we forgot that.

Within the small metal-walled cabin, Roc sat with the giant Mercutian. There was no one else in the room. They were conferring earnestly—the giant man talking, Roc doing most of the listening.

He was a man of perhaps fifty, this stranger. He chanced to be in a glow of the interior light and I could see him plainly as he sat sprawling his great lazy length on a padded bench. A man almost seven feet tall, I judged him. Heavy-set, but not with the thick, barrel-chested look of the Cold Country natives.

He was a Light Country man, by his aspect, but head and shoulders taller than the tallest Mercutian I had ever seen. He was garbed in an animal skin belted about his waist; naked limbs, and naked, hairless torso with great muscles that glided beneath his skin as he gestured.

A black mane of hair was on his head, long to cover his ears. It was white at the temples, and came in a peak over his forehead, with that same Satanic aspect characteristic of Roc. But Roc generally wore a grinning, crafty smirk. This older man's face held a look of rugged, intellectual strength. A beak-like nose; eyes deep sunken under black bushy brows; a massive, square jaw.

It was Roc's father, the exiled Croat. They were talking in the Light Country tongue. I could understand some of it—enough so that in a moment I was tense with amazement. And Tama clung to me as she listened.

HOW long we crouched there I do not know. Abruptly I heard a *ting!* An arrow flashed past us!

We started into a realization of where we were; the porte glow was on us, had disclosed us! A group of Roc's

men were coming around the forward end of the ship. Another arrow sang past.

I leaped the other way. It was fifty or sixty feet to the stern of the ship. Tama fluttered above me. I recall that I shouted, "Tama, fly off!"

I ran the ship's length in gigantic leaps. From under the stern another group of men appeared, directly in my path! I landed among them. They tried to scatter; I made an effort to check my leap and take another to clear them. A stone hit me. An arrow bit into my leg; I stooped and plucked it out. Four or five of the men rushed at me, fell upon me, and I went down.

But they could not hold me. I plunged my knife into one of them and lost it as he fell. I stood struggling, kicking, flinging them off. But there were a dozen or more here now. They came back at me like terriers. Their shouts raised the alarm. More men arrived at a run. On the ship's stern over us, Cold Country men were peer-

ing down in amazed curiosity at our swaying forms.

I was the center of a struggling group. Then from over us, Tama came like a fighting eagle into battle. A swoop. Her knife ripped a man's throat. She went past, came swooping back again.

I tore myself loose, crouched and sprang. My thirty-foot leap carried me over them all.

"Guy!"

Tama swooped at me with a rush of beating wings, and seized me. A rain of stones clattered around us. A torch-beam fell upon us and held us in its disclosing circle of light.

I cast Tama off. "Fly away—before you are hit!"

I ran on. But she came with another swoop, and caught me as I rose in one of my giant bounds. Struggled and flapped, carrying me until my weight pulled us down again.

The ship and its turmoil dwindled into distance behind us.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.

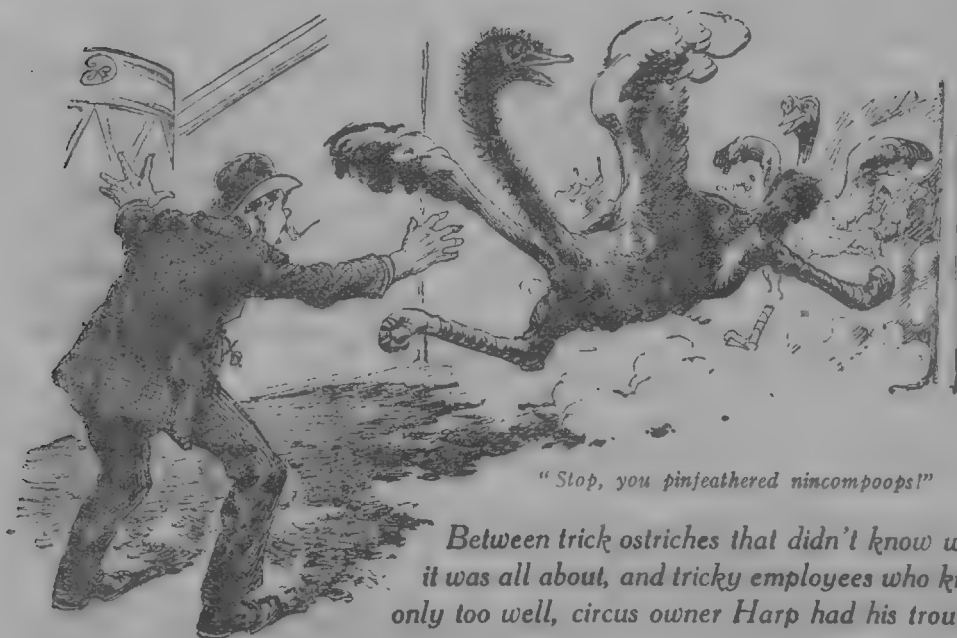


Colorado's Golden Highway

IN the southern part of Colorado there is a stretch of five miles of highway that is paved with gold. Every mile of the stretch of five miles contains three thousand dollars in virgin gold. The precious metal found its humble resting-place by reason of the fact that the crushed rock used in the cement mix was shipped from the ore dumps of the Cripple Creek gold field, which is one of the richest in the world. The gold in this material assayed one dollar and fifty cents to the ton, and with two thousand tons of the crushed ore used to each mile of the highway, the gold content of the road is three thousand dollars a mile, or fifteen thousand dollars for the entire stretch of paving. This is without doubt the only place in this world where you can ride on pavements of gold. The reason why the gold was not extracted from the rock is that the cost of refining it per ton would have cost more than the value of the gold.

Frank S. Reynolds.

Two Birds with One Bottle



Between tricky ostriches that didn't know what it was all about, and tricky employees who knew only too well, circus owner Harp had his troubles

By WARREN E. CARLETON

MR. ALSOP HARP clamped his gold-capped teeth on his long black stogie. The waxed ends of his broad blond mustache expanded across his ruddy round face in a beaming smile. For the paper on which his merry blue eyes were fixed was a legal document to the effect that the suit for damages incurred by a timber wolf escaping from his circus in upper New York State had been dismissed.

Never before had the world looked rosier. Tilting his brown derby at a jaunty angle, he waddled off toward the menagerie tent to communicate the joyous tidings to Minden, his head animal man and confidential adviser in the circus business over a period of twenty-five years or more.

"Sweet calliopes o' paradise!" jubi-

lated Mr. Harp, brushing an ash from his gaudy checkered vest. "And I was half sold on the idea that my wolf had slew them hicks' cattle. The American farmer has come to a fine pass when he's stoopin' to extract blood money from an innercent circus man. I favor farm relief, but not at the expense o' the good name o' one o' my critters. Now if it had been one o' my tigers, or a leopard, or a—"

A sudden commotion in the menagerie tent brought the squat showman up short, midway through the main entrance. Toward him bolted two tall feathered forms, with four-foot necks twisting snakily and small, large-eyed heads bobbing. After them tore five or six brown-uniformed "rookies" who took care of the show's modest collec-

tion of animals. But they stood no chance of overtaking the runaway big birds, which were putting distance between themselves and their pursuers with bewildering speed.

"Ketch 'em! Ketch 'em!" squalled Minden from somewhere in the background. "Don't let them fool ostriches escape! Stop 'em!"

Mr. Harp's better judgment was dwarfed at that moment by the specter of more damage suits. For his knowledge of the habits of ostriches was exceedingly limited, and the prospects of what might occur if they broke loose in a well-ordered poultry roost gave him the shivers. With open arms he planted himself squarely in their path to freedom, and, jumping up and down like a wild man, shouted:

"*Ee-yah!* Stop, you pin-feathered nincompoops! G'wan back! St—"

One of the terrified birds glanced back at its outdistanced pursuers, without slackening its cyclonic speed. Harp jumped aside—but too late to avoid the impact of that feathered thunderbolt. The next second, his stubby arms were clinging around a skinny length of downy neck, his chin nestled against the warm plumage of a heaving wide chest, his heels dragging over the sawdust.

A loud squawk vibrated his eardrums, as the tall bird—as much surprised by the collision as its forced tackler—abruptly checked its forward rush and began to hop violently up and down.

Breathless, his wind knocked out, his derby and stogie on the ground, the plump showman clung tenaciously while he received the worst jouncing of his nomadic career. Yet although his teeth rattled and the shifting of his latest meal produced a dizzy sensation akin to seasickness, he dared not

let go. As long as he hung onto that powerful twisting neck, he knew that his hold would prevent the infuriated fowl from pecking him. But how long he could hold on, while that everlasting jolting continued . . .

Then it seemed as if the entire personnel of the Harp show swarmed over the tackled ostrich. Harp dropped to the ground and rolled to one side. Sitting up, gasping for breath, he viewed with vast relief the nets which now enmeshed both runaway birds and the rookies who were lugging them bodily back to the wire inclosure from which they had made their abrupt getaway.

For the other ostrich had evidently abandoned its hopeless bolt for freedom when it saw that Harp had corralled its mate.

"By cracky, Alsop, you saved the day!" The lanky form of Minden bent over the puffing, crimson-faced circus owner and a broad grin tilted up the ends of his mournful black walrus mustache. "No football hero ever shone in a flyin' tackle like you jest done."

Harp cocked a resentful eye at his elongated admirer.

"Them remarks, Minden," said he, "may be well intended, but they fall on inappreciative ears. If I ever looked with envy on them that craves glory by courtin' a busted neck, my cure is complete and everlastin'."

Indeed, the squat showman was a mess. His sharp-pointed starched collar was unhooked, exposing his fat pink neck. His ornate vest was liberally plastered with moist sawdust. Dirt streaked his cheeks and forehead and the bald spot centered in his sparse yellowish hair.

"You ain't busted up none, though," Minden comforted him. "And we've

still got our ostriches. That's considerable."

HARP got stiffly to his feet. "Bad cess to them dod-gasted birds!"

He shook his fist at the ostrich pen, into which the captured big fowls were being restored. "Them ostriches have fell far short o' my expectations since I imported 'em into my show. First they're dainty, then they overfeed, and the veterinary is workin' over 'em most of the time.

"But this affront to what dignity I've got left is the last straw. Out they go! I've a good mind to have the chef dress 'em off and roast 'em. Tough they'd probably turn out to be, but I'd carve off my portion o' white and dark meat with the keenest o' relishes!"

"They ain't much use except to make trouble," agreed Minden. "Now take most critters we've got in the menagerie, they're good for somethin' else besides bein' parked in the menagerie tent an' havin' rubes gawk at 'em. Every elephant we've got puffums in the ring. Madame Estelle has her act with the lions, Cap'n Jack with the leopards, Stanley with the zebras, and Dennison with the bears. Even the snakes earn their passage in the side-show with that female who charms 'em. But what them brainless ostriches could do would stump Noah."

In his vest pocket Harp located a stogie that was not crushed, drew it out and bit off its end.

"By the unsanctified heathen prophets!" His blue eyes widened with enthusiasm. "Minden, there is a use that ostriches can be put to besides dressin' hats. That banquet I'm contemplatin' off'n 'em is indefinitely postponed."

Minden's brown eyes contracted suspiciously. "Alsop, did that joun-

in' them birds give you go to your head?"

The squat showman lighted his stogie. "How's Tom Rawlinson usin' them ostriches he's got in his show?"

It was the menagerie head keeper's eyes that widened now. "By golly, that's right, Alsop! That's an idea!"

"What would be more thrillin' on our program than an ostrich race, Minden?" The rotund circus owner excitedly chewed his stogie. "By the great winged hyena, I bet it's turned out to be Tom Rawlinson's biggest drawin' card! He wouldn't 'a' held it over from last season if it hadn't."

"There ain't a fleeter critter than one o' them ostriches, once it cuts loose." Minden reflectively tugged one end of his mustache.

"You ain't got the slightest conception o' what speed is till one of 'em hits you. You get two of 'em tearin' round the arena hitched to gigs, and the Roman chariot race would look like a pitched baseball alongside of a shot from a twelve-inch gun. Minden, I'm goin' to send for them gigs and an entire ostrich-racin' equipment. From now on, that ostrich race ain't no idle speculation. She's a stern reality!"

"You'd better make a few investigations about ostrich racin' first," suggested Minden. "Tom Rawlinson's under obligations to you for that leopard you sold him that died after it reached him, and you gave him back his money for. Why don't you go see him and talk over the ostrich-racin' proposition before you—"

"If Rawlinson can get away with it, I can—and without none of his tips," declared Harp.

"But his advice might save you money, Alsop. And this season, of all seasons, is one we've got to keep expenses down. We didn't pull through

none too well last year. And if we run into a rainy season this year, with the big York show crossin' routes with us when we hit the Middle West, a few extry bucks salted away in the treasury will look like a million to us."

"I DON'T aim to draw heavy on the treasury to put over that ostrich race." Harp was as stubborn as a mule when he got a new idea, and an idea born was an idea to put into operation, while it was still red-hot. "Now the first thing we've got to do is to find two lightweight guys to ride in them gigs and drive 'em. You got two lightweights in your menagerie force who'd fill the bill, Minden?"

The head animal man stroked his mustache. "Sure—the Reeder twins!" he exclaimed. "They're a worthless, lazy, no-good pair—two crooks hidin' out, if you ask me. But if they've got nerve enough to set on them gigs, I reckon you can't find nobody with better builds for ostrich-jockeyin'."

"Lead me to 'em!" Harp glanced around the interior of the menagerie tent.

"There they are, shootin' craps over by the zebras. But I still maintain, Alsop, you'd ought to wait till—"

The squat showman, however, had retrieved his brown derby and was hot-footing it toward the zebras' inclosure, where the reclining striped beasts were languidly watching the animated two-handed crap game in progress between shows. Pete and Mose Reeder quickly gathered in the dice and got up guiltily when they spotted their rotund employer bearing down on them. They were both slight-built, insignificant-looking shrimps, their hatchet faces and dark eyes identical, their brown uniforms oversized, their stiff brown caps lopping over their outstanding ears.

But Harp's bland smile reassured them.

"Boys," he asked, "how'd you like to be ostrich drivers in the big show?"

Pete and Mose looked blankly at each other.

"Now here's the dope," Harp went on. "I'm ambitious to stage an ostrich race in each puffformance, and you guys have got just the right build for drivin' 'em."

"You mean for us to set on their backs?" Mose looked worried.

"No, no, of course not!" Harp explained irritably. "You set on gigs and drive 'em like you would race horses. All you've got to do is hang onto the ribbons. The ostriches will do the rest. Think o' the thrill there'd be in it for you two! Think o' the glory, the money I'd pay you, your rise from the low estate of common circus rookies to stellar pufformers in the big show!"

"I ain't lookin' for thrills," snarled Pete. "Nor glory, either. But I could use more jack. It wouldn't do me no good, though, if I got killed."

"Them ostriches we just chased don't make me hanker to set in no gigs behind 'em," sneered Mose. "I'd about as soon be fastened to a big skyrocket."

"Ain't you got no manhood?" the squat showman hung on. For he was satisfied that he had found the best men attainable for ostrich-driving. They did not weigh over a hundred pounds apiece. Their weight and that of the light gigs would be negligible.

"Don't you realize that with the ribbons in your hands, you'd be masters o' the situation? Who'd ever heard o' Steve Brodie if he hadn't took a chance?"

"Steve Brodie wa'n't hitched to no ostrich," Pete pointed out.

"He only jumped off'n a bridge," amplified Mose.

Harp sighed and shook his head in despair. "All right," he said, and started to walk away. "Then if I can't do business with you two, there'll be plenty o' more enterprisin' guys who 'll jump at the chance."

"Hold on, Mr. Harp!" sang out Pete. Harp paused. "What would you pay us? Remember, it's risky business. But mebbe if you made it worth our while—"

"Forty a week apiece," eagerly replied the rotund circus owner—too eagerly. "And I'll put it in a contract for the rest o' the season in black and white."

Mose and Pete exchanged a questioning glance.

"Make it fifty, and we'll see it," said Mose. "We was thinkin' o' quitfin' the show, anyhow, in about a week. But if we can see that much jack ahead, we'll stick and go-through with our end of the stunt."

Harp scratched his head. A hundred a week for the two ostrich drivers, eighteen weeks before the finish of the season. That would run up into real money. Eighteen hundred dollars might mean the difference between bankruptcy and hanging on till another year.

Yet with Pete and Mose Reeder about to quit the show, and two light-weights like them not growing on every bush—

"She's a go!" Harp gave in. "Fifty a week apiece. Come over to the treasury wagon, and we'll draw up that contract right now!"

TALCOTT, the show's wagon master, measured the ostriches and drew up specifications for their light metal racing sulkies. Wilkes, the harnessmaker, fashioned their leather breastbands, bridles, reins, and traces.

And as soon as the harnesses were finished, with the order for the sulkies in the hands of the carriage maker, Harp, Minden, and the Reeder twins started in to familiarize themselves and the mystified big birds with the intricacies of ostrich-racing.

First, Minden dressed the feathered racers in their light leather harnesses. They hopped and squawked protestingly during the operation, and the services of six rookies were required to hold each of them. Then they were lugged bodily to a couple of old racing gigs constructed for horses—two antiquated vehicles which, along with much other worthless junk, Harp had insisted on transporting all over the country for years.

With the rookies subduing the struggles of the powerful big birds, they were hitched inside the shafts. Pete and Mose ascended to the drivers' seats and tremblingly took the reins.

"Don't get scared, boys," Harp cheered them, chewing his stogie with excitement and expectancy. "Remember Dewey at Manila, and take heart."

He glanced at Minden, who nodded his approval that all was ready. "Let 'er go!" the squat showman sang out.

Minden and the rookies jumped back. For a moment, the released birds stood motionless, then both at the same time hopped off the ground. But the harness tugged them back, and they glanced about in terror to find out what was holding them. Seeing the rigs to which they were attached, they went into a panic and wildly hopped up and down, lifting the shafts with them as they struggled frantically to break loose.

"Tug on the reins!" shouted Harp to Mose and Pete, who were sliding back and forth on their seats with each jerky movement of the agitated fowl.

The twins pulled. Pete's ostrich sat down solidly, but instantly jumped up and started to run, hauling the gig along after it.

"That's the stuff!" squalled the delighted showman. "Let 'im go! Give 'im free rein!"

Across the arena under the deserted big top Pete's ostrich streaked. And after it now came Mose and his bird. Both drivers held a loose rein, hunched forward, anxious, tense, pale as ghosts.

"By the flutterin' punkahs o' Cleopatra!" exulted Harp, biting down on his stogie and thumping Minden resoundingly between the shoulders. "Ain't that a picture? Never have I seen or hope to behold such feathered streaks o' lightnin' as them noble birds o' mine! I hereby take back all them hasty words o' malediction I ever heaped upon their highly intelligent heads! Them fleet-footed coursers o' the great Sahara. . . . Oh, heck!"

His stogie dropped. Pete's ostrich had suddenly stopped and again was hopping up and down. And Mose's weak-minded bird, observing the antics of its mate, was vigorously doing the same. In fact, their frantic efforts to disengage themselves from their harnesses were as senseless and violent as the flopping about of decapitated barnyard fowl. Harp was alarmed.

"Come on!" he shouted to Minden and the rookies, scurrying across the arena with them at his heels. "Them birds will wring their own necks bustin' around like that. Save 'em before they commit suicide! They've had enough."

EVERY subsequent day, between shows, the rehearsals with the ostriches continued. But the Reeder twins and the big birds made no perceptible progress whatsoever. Now and

then they cut loose for short runs, but most of the time they were in the harness, the ostriches merely hopped up and down and struggled to liberate themselves. When the light sulkies finally arrived from the carriage maker, the feathered pair were no farther advanced in the technique of racing than they had been at their first tryout.

Nor was their performance more encouraging when they were hitched to the light sulkies especially constructed for them. Harp surveyed them mournfully.

"Of all the critters I ever had dealin's with," he muttered, "them ostriches are the dumbest. Here they've got a chance to make glowin' headway in the world, and they don't know enough to grasp it. If 'twas a matter of devourin' anythin' colicky from a carpet tack to a board nail, you wouldn't see 'em hesitate. They'd . . ."

He bit down on his stogie, and his blue eyes lighted up.

"Hitch up one o' them Roman chariots!" he bawled at Minden. "Hold them self-destructive birds till I tell you to let 'em go," he commanded the rookies. For the ostriches were again flopping about with utter disregard for their physical well-being.

Harp waddled off to the menagerie tent and returned with a peck measure half full of cracked corn. Into the arena soon thundered a Roman chariot drawn by three horses and driven by a hard-faced, tobacco-chewing Ben Hur. It came to a rumbling stop. Holding the measure of corn in his plump hands, Harp seated himself on the rear end of the solidly built vehicle.

"Fetch up them ostriches!" he yelled.

The rookies dragged the struggling birds closer. Harp held out the measure of corn toward them and shook it.

Immediately the terror of the big fowl subsided, their interest centered on the measure rattling temptingly before them.

"Their appetites will triumph where brains fell short!" gloated the squat showman, squirming on his splintery perch. "Hold up the reins!" he enthusiastically yelled to Pete and Mose on the drivers' seats. "Let 'er go!" he barked at the charioteer. "Liberate them birds!" he bawled at Minden and the rookies.

Away rumbled the chariot, Harp bumping on the rear end, the measure of corn held out in both hands. Off the ground hopped the ostriches. Straight toward the thundering chariot they bolted, necks outstretched, long legs flying, the light metal sulkies and their lightweight drivers skimming over the sawdust behind them.

Faster went the jolting chariot. Faster sped the ostriches, their steady, easy gait rapidly overhauling the lumbering vehicle. Closer drew their out-thrust heads to the alluring bait. Half-way around the arena, they poked their open beaks into the measure and jostled against each other to gobble up the corn.

HARP saw it coming—the inevitable collision of the two sulkies shunting side wise into each other. He tried to yell a warning, but the jouncing of the chariot drove the words back down his throat. His stogie slumped downward, and he gasped for breath.

Pete and Mose were hanging onto the reins for dear life, terror in their dark eyes as the sulkies swept against each other, locked wheels and were dragged as if lashed together in the wake of the powerful birds. For the ostriches were not slackening speed.

Their energies were concentrated on the measure of corn, heedless of what was going on behind them.

"Pink pythons!" groaned Harp. He cast the measure disgustedly to the ground. The ostriches separated and greedily thrust down their heads to pick up the corn scattered over the sawdust. Pete and Mose jumped down from their jeopardized perches. Minden and the rookies raced across the arena toward the now contentedly feeding big birds.

"Whoa!" roared the charioteer, furiously tugging at the reins.

Before the horses came to a dead stop, Harp slid out and planted his feet on the ground. Savagely he waddled off toward the group surrounding the captured ostriches. He plucked an inquisitive splinter from the seat of his trousers.

"That ostrich race is all off," he spitefully decreed to Minden and the drivers of the damaged sulkies. "Human patience can never develop brains and self-respect in a critter that ain't got none. I can't entice 'em with cracked corn on the tail end of a Roman chariot in a regular pufformance, even if it did make 'em race proper. Devil of a spectacle *that* would be!"

He turned sadly to Pete and Mose. "Boys, it looks like your chance to win fame an' fortune by the ostrich route has gone a glimmerin'. Fickle Fate has decreed for me to set down the feature I been bankin' on as a dud, and your position in the show to continue as rookies, after all."

The lightweight twins glanced at each other and smiled sneeringly.

"Where you get that stuff, 'rookies'?" snarled Mose. He drew a brown leather wallet from his hip pocket and patted it. "Ain't I got my copy of the contract you drawed up

with us right here? Don't it call for the rest of the season?"

"Sure," chimed in Pete. "We should worry about whether you race them ostriches or not. That's what you hired us to do. And that's what you're payin' us our fifty bucks a week apiece for till the season's over. If we don't have to risk our necks to get it, that's your hard luck, not ours."

IT was a glum and morose Alsop Harp who went into conference with Minden late that afternoon in the treasury wagon.

"Stung! That's what I am, good and proper," lamented the squat showman. "Now that worthless pair o' twins are privileged to fritter away their time around my show without liftin' a finger—and drawin' a cold hundred a week for doin' nothin'! And eighteen weeks for the season to run. Eighteen hundred dollars! Minden, if we run into the hard luck we did last season, that eighteen hundred may break me!"

The lanky head animal man sadly shook his head. "I tried to warn you, Alsop, but you would—"

"Heck of a lot o' comfort *that* is now. If the breaks hadn't went against us, that ostrich race would 'a' been one o' the best investments I ever made. There's lots o' guys with sportin' instincts who'd never think o' takin' in a circus, but who'd buy tickets quick if they was treated to the thrills of an ostrich race. I didn't go into it with my eyes shut. We can't compete with the big York show when we cross routes with 'em unless we've got somethin' special to offer."

"But that eighteen hundred!" groaned Minden. "Think o' the feed it would buy for our menagerie critters! The extry credit it would give

us with guys who are shaky about trustin' us for expense bills when the show's in winter quarters!"

"Don't make me any sicker than I am now, Minden. What upsets me more'n the squanderin' o' that eighteen hundred is that we ain't buildin' up our program to stack up against the one the York show offers. But cruel as the blow is, I ain't welchin'. I always was a good loser."

"Yeah, Alsop, too often for your own good."

"Now if I thought there was a ghost of a chance o' them ostriches ever runnin' straight ahead instid o' jest hoppin' up and down, I'd keep on with their instruction," Harp mused. "But with such a hopeless brace o' fowl as them—"

"There must be some way o' makin' 'em run," Minden broke in. "Ostriches can be made to race. The proof is that they do it."

"Yeah, like Tom Rawlinson's birds." Harp's blue eyes brightened, and he slapped his fat hand down on his plump thigh. "By the great winged hyena, Minden, I'm goin' to accept the advice you give me in the first place! I'm goin' to see Tom Rawlinson and have a talk with him on the ostrich subject!"

"Now you're talkin' sense, Alsop." Minden smiled triumphantly. "If any one's got the dope on racin' ostriches, Tom Rawlinson had ought to have it. There's still a chance that your eighteen hundred ain't teetotally a dead loss."

THE following morning, Harp entrained from southeastern Massachusetts for Connecticut, where the Rawlinson show was playing one-day stands. The dignified, erect, white-whiskered proprietor of the little

animal circus greeted him warmly, although a bit anxiously, as if he were apprehensive lest Harp's mission be to collect for the deceased leopard. But Harp quickly banished his doubts.

"Tom," he confessed, "I'm in hot water up to my neck." And he related his experiences with the ostriches and their blood-sucking drivers.

"I wish I'd known you were planning an ostrich race," remarked Rawlinson at the conclusion of Harp's story. "I could have tipped you off that an ostrich race isn't so hot, and steered you off it before you got tied up with those two tricky rookies of yours."

"No, not for *your* show it ain't so hot," agreed Harp. "You've got so many freak animal acts, it comes as a sort of uncalled-for necessity. But for *my* show, it's jest the ticket."

"Yes, our shows are different, and that's why we can cover practically the same routes and still make money," admitted Rawlinson, stroking his white sideburns. "You wait. I'll call in my ostrich drivers, Collins and Wade. They were brought up on a California ostrich farm, and what they don't know about ostriches isn't worth mentioning."

Collins and Wade forthwith joined the conference. Harp was surprised that they were not lightweights like the Reeder twins. They were not heavily built, but were broad of shoulders and thickset, of medium height. Collins was blue-eyed, square-jawed, light-haired; Wade had brown eyes, long features, and dark hair. Like themselves, the birds which they drove were products of a California ostrich farm.

They listened smilingly to Harp's recital of his ostrich adversities.

"The main trouble with them birds is that they ain't racin' ostriches," observed Collins. "Racin' ostriches are

broke into the game when they ain't much more than chicks."

"But I'll tell you what'll make any ostrich race, whether he's brought up to it or not," chuckled Wade, and he told Harp of an experiment they had once tried.

"It still makes me laugh," said Collins. "Did they travel? Man, we couldn't hold 'em!" He went on to give details.

"Is that so?" Harp was all interest. "Say, mebbe that's jest the treatment them ostriches o' mine need! Mebbe if I . . ."

He jerked a stogie from the pocket of his gaudy vest and mechanically bit off the end. Then he took the conversation completely into his own hands. When he had outlined his scheme, Rawlinson, Collins, and Wade were roaring with laughter and slapping their knees hilariously. And when Harp departed for his own show late that night, a broad grin wreathed his rubicund face, and his stogie was cocked up at an angle indicative of absolute self-satisfaction.

There was a bulge, too, in his hip pocket.

ON his return to his show, Harp looked up Mose and Pete. He found them under a shady pine tree, engaged in their favorite recreation—crap-shooting. They peered up haughtily when he approached.

"Boys," he said, handing them their week's salary, "we're not far from Boston, and there's no reason why you shouldn't visit the big town and show yourselves a good time. You have my permission to absent yourselves from my show for a couple o' days, if you want to. Of course, your pay will run on jest the same, as per contract."

"Put it in black an' white," snarled

Pete. "We're takin' no chances on you foxin' us."

"Sure I will, boys!" the squat showman readily consented. And he wrote out a permit for them to leave the show for two days, and signed his name to it.

"Thanks," said Mose, drawing his wallet and folding the permit into it. "A spree in Boston sure appeals to me, after seein' nothin' but hick burgs for several weeks."

"Me, too," chimed in Pete.

That afternoon the Reeder twins departed for Boston. Two days later they rejoined the show in the western part of Massachusetts, and reported to Harp, whom they found in the treasury wagon.

"Jest in time, boys." The rotund circus owner was all smiles. "We've got the ostrich race advertised on special posters in this burg we're playin' in. We're puttin' it on to-night!"

"Puttin' on the ostrich race!" Pete and Mose stared at him in amazement, then at each other.

"Don't get excited," Harp reassured them. "I'd ought to say we're goin' to start to put on that ostrich race. Of course I don't expect it to cut any great dash on the program, but it'll look to the crowd like our intentions was good, anyhow. If she don't work—and she never has yet—I'll make an announcement that the ostrich is the temperamentalest o' fowl, and can't always be depended on to be governed by human will. Get me?" He accorded them a sly wink.

"We git you," Pete grinned. "What you're really doin' is soft-soapin' the crowd to give 'em their money's worth."

"You got wise and accurate perception, boys," Harp chuckled. "We'll put on the ostrich race right after the

lion act in the middle o' the show. Be ready."

THAT night, during the performance, Harp and Minden supervised the hitching of the ostriches to their repaired sulkies. Pete and Mose looked on, attired in white jockey costumes resurrected from an obscure wardrobe box. They snickered and nudged each other derisively, entering into the spirit of the hoax on the crowd that packed the stands under the big top.

The big birds were surprisingly meek, however, as if resigned to the familiar ordeal which lay ahead of them. Or perhaps they were saving their steam for the flopping up and down which would animate them when they were in the arena.

When they were hitched up and the rookies were holding them with little effort outside the performers' entrance to the big top, Harp whipped a bottle out of his hip pocket. Chewing his unlighted stogie, he seized one of the birds by the neck, opened its willing beak, and poured a stiff dose of the bottle's yellow liquid contents down its throat.

"What's that stuff?" inquired Mose, while the squat showman repeated the operation with the other ostrich.

"Bird oil," replied Harp through teeth clenched on his stogie. "See how they like it! They have got brains enough to reco'nize what's good for 'em."

The ringmaster's whistle shrilled, announcing the end of the lion act. The band struck up a lively march.

"Get in your seats!" Harp called to Mose and Pete. "Hang onto them ostriches!" he yelled at the rookies. For the birds were now hopping up and down, heads thrown back, strain-

ing at their harnesses, jerking at the reins, to all appearances r'aring to go.

The Reeder twins ascended to their respective perches and took the reins. The sudden animation of the harnessed fowl didn't worry them; they were sure it was only the prelude to the fiasco that was about to ensue.

The lions were being conveyed from the ring in their small box cages. Rookies were taking down the big circular iron inclosure in which the cats had performed. The ostriches faced the flickering gas lights of the main arena, about eight feet separating the two sulkies. The big birds were straining at their harnesses, and it was all the rookies could do to hold them.

Again the ringmaster's whistle blew. "Let 'er go!" shouted Harp.

OUT into the arena the ostriches and their sulkies shot. The crowd burst into a loud and enthusiastic cheer. Harp and Minden and the rookies romped after the streaking racers, and stopped just inside the arena to watch the exhibition.

And like the crowd, they got an eyeful. Already the two fleet birds and their sulkies had rounded the first turn of the huge circular track and were bolting toward the second. Pete and Mose were mere blurs of white above the glittering metal of their sawdust-skimming vehicles, the wheels of which appeared to be six or eight inches off the ground. Necks bobbing back and forth, long legs invisible in their lightning-fast strides, only a slight wabbling motion discernible at the hips, the ostriches rounded the second turn and flashed to the third.

"By the tough brisket o' the immortal Daniel!" chattered the enrap-tured circus owner, grinding his stogie between his gold-capped teeth. "Never

have I seen or hope to behold such streaks o' blue lightnin' in feathered form! Neck and neck from the start—and still at a dead heat! I ain't a drinkin' man, but if *that's* what that 'tonic' does for 'em, I'm takin' a shot of it myself every mornin'. That ostrich race henceforth occupies the place of honor on my program. Them noble birds . . . Jumpin' gazelles!"

The stogie dropped from his nerveless lips. His mouth flew agape. For with the third turn left behind, the ostriches, instead of heading for the fourth, were stretching their necks toward the open side exit from the big top! And while the squat showman stood breathless, paralyzed with surprise and apprehension, the addle-pated fowl shot through the opening onto the show grounds, carrying sulkies and twins with them.

The rush of Minden and the rookies past him snapped Harp out of his horrified trance. Loud roars of laughter pealed from the stands. But the dispenser of the "bird-oil" did not share the general mirth. With his heart in his throat, he put after his head menagerie keeper and the latter's brown-uniformed assistants.

"They'll be killed sure—ostriches and twins both!" Harp panted as he tore after them through the exit, his brown derby flying off, his bald spot shining. "Their blood will be on my soul!"

He stopped, breathless, before a gas light which had previously illuminated an African dodger's tent. And the sight which met his eyes was enough to give any showman apoplexy. For under the light lay a tangle of ropes and canvas that heaved and tossed with something thrashing under it.

He grabbed one end of the wrecked tent and yanked it up, while Minden

and his rookies dragged the rest of it clear. There stood the exposed ostriches, squawking and craning their long necks, but hopping about with zeal which proved quite conclusively that they were uninjured. On the ground lay a howling colored gentleman, who jerked up to his knees and vociferously started to pray. And beside him, Pete and Mose sat up, groaning and tenderly caressing bumps on their heads, deathly pale, wild-eyed, all aquiver. The sulkies were hopeless wrecks of interlocked smashed wheels and snapped wires.

"GLORY be to this circus man's guardeen angel!" devoutly breathed Harp. Then his mind turned to business. Bending over the moaning twins: "Boys, you done fine! Them critters *will* race. And now your fortunes are made. You'll be all right when you cool off. Then, after we get new sulkies, you can go ahead with racin' them ostriches as per contract."

"To heck with the contract!" squealed Pete. "You can send me to jail if you want to for bustin' it, but that contract's all off! I wouldn't roost behind them fool birds again if you gave me the whole bloomin' show!"

"Oh, my head!" moaned Mose. "I'd rather die an' have it over with than go through that again!"

Harp sadly shook his sleek head. "Well, boys, if that's how you feel about it, I wouldn't be so mean that I'd hold you to that agreement of ourn. You got your copy handy?"

"Right here!" Mose drew his wallet from his hip pocket and extracted a dirty folded document. "Take it an' welcome!"

"Thanks." Harp unfolded the

paper, glanced at it, and grinned broadly. He stood up and beckoned to two brown-uniformed, thickset rookies who were 'unharnessing the ostriches. They came up, leading the obedient big birds.

"Boys, I want you to meet Collins and Wade, late of the Tom Rawlinson show, your successors in my outfit!"

Pete and Mose looked blank.

"Them ostriches you drove to-night," Harp explained, "wa'n't them nitwit birds you're familiar with, boys. While you two was on your Boston spree, I swapped my birds with Tom Rawlinson for his, and the drivers came with 'em."

"An' that hair tonic worked on 'em exactly like it did that time we tried it on 'em," laughed Collins. "I reckoned 'twould take the ostrich-racin' ambitions out o' them drivers o' yours if anything would."

"It run 'em out o' my show, and that's all I wanted it to do," chuckled Harp. "And now I'm all set to watch a *real* ostrich race, with you and Wade holdin' the ribbons. I'm satisfied more'n ever that it's jest what my show needs. And now crossin' routes with the York show don't hold the terror for me it did. I'm sure beholden to Tom Rawlinson for this, and the dead-leopard favor I done him don't begin to square us, either."

"And the same applies to you boys for that hair tonic tip. I'm goin' to lay in a stock o' that 'bird oil'. If it's as powerful on top o' the head as it is inside, in six months' time you hadn't ought to tell me and the Circasian Lady apart. But for a mornin' eye-opener, no, sir—not till I'm ambitious to take up my abode in the monkey cage. Me and the ostriches will both stick to water."

THE END.



"Them guys have harems," Quorn warned the lady novelist with a grin

The Elephant Sahib

Dacoits, the ruthless hijackers of India's remote border States, are one of the least perils that beset the young girl ruler of Narada and her loyal aide, Ben Quorn, the American-born master of elephants

By TALBOT MUNDY

Author of "Asoka's Alibi," "The Affair at Kaligaon," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

I AM afraid you must die, Mr. Quorn," was the greeting of the young Ranees of Narada, an independent State on India's mountain border, to her one completely faithful officer, the Philadelphia-born keeper of her elephants.

For Quorn, ex-taxi-driver, had such a mysterious power over the otherwise untamable Asoka, the five ton giant elephant, that the superstitious natives believed him a reincarnation of the legendary Gunga sahib, a half-god of the old days; just as they believed

Asoka a reincarnation of Gunga sahib's elephant, and the Ranees a princess of that bygone time. And the Brahmin priests, jealous of the Ranees' power and furious at her progressive plans for cleaning up Narada's worst indecencies, had fostered the belief, saying that all three of them would die and then come to life again to save Narada. All that interested the Brahmins was making sure they died, and quickly.

And things were complicated by the desire of three neighboring rajahs to

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annex the beautiful Ranee and her kingdom—in spite of her known fondness for the penniless but daring prince, Rana Raj Singh. These rajahs had driven the dacoits—organized bands of robbers—from their States into Narada, where they had just about conquered the region about the ruined palace of Panch Mahal.

So the Ranee sent Quorn, at the head of thirty-four elephants, to protect her workmen rebuilding that palace. But he found the workmen treacherous, and was himself captured by Usha, the Rajah of Dumdumpore's clever dancing girl, and threatened with torture if he would not betray the Ranee to the rajah.

Bamjee, the Ranee's wily *babu* purchasing agent, loyal to his own pocket and more or less to her, arrived with a shrewish widow, a Mrs. Galway, bent on writing about India's horrors. Quorn and Prince Rana Raj Singh staged a dacoit raid—which turned out to be only too real—to further their plan of disguising the Galway woman as the Ranee.

CHAPTER VIII.

"YOUR CLOTHES IS GONE. THE DACOITS TOOK 'EM."

IT was no time to depend on Bamjee. The *babu* was petrified—utterly useless—numbed by the dynamic novelty of Mrs. Galway in her night attire. He and his two men sat in awe and contemplated her by the light of a hurricane lantern, in a deep depression behind a rock that hove its bulk against the rising moon and made ponderous shadow. Having nagged them into uselessness, she used her tongue now to bring other victims on the scene.

"Help! Help!"

She kept on screaming until Quorn came in sight on Asoka; and because his head was higher than the rock he was rounding, she saw that first, framed in a moon-made aura, like a god's face smiling out of nothing. So she screamed again, louder than ever.

"There, there, missy, nobody won't do you no harm. See, I brought along some magic for what ails you. No, 'tain't sinful stuff. It looks like it, and it smells like it, but it ain't, not by a long way, though it's in a whisky bottle, along o' my having no other kind."

Quorn made Asoka kneel and came to earth. He knocked off the neck of the bottle with an old-time expert's sleight-of-hand. "Here, help yourself."

"Are you sure it isn't whisky?"

"Watch me prove it to you." He spied a tin cup tied to the waist of one of Bamjee's servants—commandeered the thing and filled it—passed that to Asoka, who sucked the cup dry with a snort, then injected the dose down his throat with a gurgle of satisfaction and demanded more.

"Can you suspect me after that, miss?"

"No," she said tartly. "I would suspect any man in this dreadful country, but animals are more to be depended on. Certainly I will not drink from that filthy cup. I must drink from the bottle. What is it?" She sniffed and drank.

"Be kind o' keerful not to cut your mouth, miss."

She swallowed, coughed, spluttered and drank again.

"You might leave some of it," Quorn suggested.

"Are you sure it's not whisky?" she asked. She tried again. Pre-Adamite instinct had control of her, perhaps

encouraged by the fact that her costume was not so far removed from that of Eve in the age of innocence. It was true she was wearing a blanket and a long white nightgown underneath it, but her feet were naked and there was a vast power in suggestion. She began to feel nymphlike, if not positively bacchanalian.

"It must be something won'erful," she remarked. "Is that the moon?"

Quorn rescued the bottle, nodded to himself and drank. Magnanimously then he gave a tot apiece to Bamjee and the two men, measuring it precisely into the tin cup, after which he took another drink himself and gave what was left to Asoka, who gurgled satisfaction over an evening well spent.

"Now, miss, seeing as how them dacoits wrecked your tent—"

But Quorn had spoken too soon; not yet had the nectar done its work; her vinegar was not yet wine. She interrupted:

"Don't you dare talk to me about your dacoits! If there's anything gone from my tent I shall know who took it! It was those workmen from the quarry—I know it was, and you're reshponsible—you shaid you are!"

"I mean to let you have my tent, miss—ain't no other thing to do. I'll turn in along o' the elephants."

"Do you mean I am to use your bed?"

"I guess so."

"Is it clean?"

thought of Quorn's bed. But the fumes were quite familiar to Quorn and had an opposite effect: they made him genially courteous.

"I dare say, miss, it ain't no cleaner than it should be, but it's all you'll get because there ain't no other. Bugs is bugs, and I ain't more particular than most folks has a right to be in this here country, but you'll find 'em kind o' broke in. They've learned manners, 'cause I've scratched 'em so they had to. Mostly they lets you fall asleep before they—"

"I won't be told about your filthy inshex."

"All right, miss. Okay. I was only joking."

"Shno time for joking. Make Bamjee bring shome of my clothes."

That was the last entirely sober speech she made that night. The dire news that Quorn now broke to her supplied emotion which was all the whisky needed to make conquest swift and sure.

"Beg pardon, miss. Your clothes is gone. The dacoits took 'em."

"Do you mean to tell me—"

But she could not finish it. She laid her face between her hands and wept with the noisy self-pitying unrestraint of a woman more used to forcing tears from others than indulging in such weakness on her own account. Between her hands she sobbed forth broken sentences, mixed with lamentation and threats of vengeance, drunkenness serving as a flux to meld the two together into one immodest boast of her importance.

THE fumes of unfamiliar whisky swayed her between a sort of sensuous feeling that she was in the midst of an adventure, and resentment that she must accept Quorn's favors. Also there was something suggestive of immodesty about the

She would sue the Ranee. She would sue Quorn. She would wire to Washington. She was ruined. She was a fool ever to have come to such a country. She would write to the Associated Press. She would put it all into her

book—all the bugs and the dirt, and the cheating and lies, the diseases and the indignity of women.

She would have revenge. All India should pay in shame for her misadventure. Suddenly a worse thought than them all—a thought that almost, for the moment, sobered her:

"My notebooks?"

"Gone, miss. Every durned last scrap of everything is gone clean plumb to Hades!"

She refused to endure such calamity. She shrieked her anguish to the sky, reproving God for neglect of His handmaiden. She demanded, with ever-increasing thickness in her speech, to be clothed in many blankets and led back to the nearest railway station on the camel.

"Can't be done, miss. Some guy cut the camel's throat."

She would ride in a bullock-cart.

"Carts is busted."

Then the deluge—anger and weeping followed by hysteria and hiccoughs that Quorn treated with the sort of friendly violence he would have used on elephants or a mahout who needed sobering. He pounded her on the back until her false teeth shook and her speech was less clear than it had been.

But bullies are all amenable to force; she succumbed to that treatment; she yielded to him.

"I'm sho shick."

"Give you a nice ride on an elephant," said Quorn. "That'll make you feel like you was Queen o' Sheba. Hey, you fellers, hold her while I climb up—then you pass her up to me."

HE mounted on Asoka's neck and signed to the three struggling Hindus to place her in front of him, so that he could hold her by the waist. A nightdress and a blanket are

no costume for a ride of that kind, and a Hindu is no prude when it comes to nakedness; Bamjee pulled her night-dress up to let her legs hang freely behind Asoka's ears and the moonlight shone on a pair of very shapely limbs that would not have disgraced a chorus girl.

Against the elephant's dark skin, in that soft amber light, they were good to see. She saw them and struggled—almost struggled out of Quorn's arms. She was shocked so that the fumes of whisky almost lost their grip on her brain. She screamed.

"Hush, hush — them ain't your legs," Quorn told her soothingly. "Them's mine."

She sighed, not daring to disbelieve him, leaning her head on his shoulder and looking up at the sky, ashamed and yet not altogether sorry to feel a strong arm holding her. Asoka swayed toward his shed, where he knew there would be extra hot cakes cooking as reward for extra work well done.

It was not unlike the motion of a small boat. The stars swung and swayed. There were two moons that kept on separating and then reuniting into something like the figure eight. She retained her dinner and her dignity with a will that habit had made automatic, but the weakness was there; it transmuted itself into self-reproach:

"Was I rude? I'm sho' shorry."

Quorn squeezed her. He hardly intended it, but sympathy is more compelling than the sense of caution. He was not a mean man, and he knew that she had suffered, more than some folk might under a hangman's lash. He imagined her sensations in the morning when she should awake and see the remnants of her tent and all the havoc that Asoka did.

It was only a friendly squeeze—a

gesture of regret that she should be the victim of circumstance. He felt no guilt until she answered it by groping for his arm and pressing it with both her hands.

"Oh, holy mackerel!" he murmured then and whistled to himself a mite off-key.

She let herself lie loosely in his arms, her head on his shoulder, her body relaxed as if she had at last found some one in whom a vinegary old maid might confide without regret, she being much more virginal, though a widow, than some folk who have never entered the alleged blessed state of matrimony.

She was asleep before they reached the tent, so she was spared the shame of knowing how shapely and gleaming her legs looked when Bamjee and two others lowered her to earth.

THEY laid her on Quorn's bed and Quorn removed all of his other possessions to a comfortless lean-to made of sheets of corrugated iron beside Asoka's shelter. Then, when he had seen the hot cakes cooked that were Asoka's special reward, he mounted a pony left for him by one of Rana Raj Singh's men and rode to the Rajput's camp, a mile away beyond a low hill.

CHAPTER IX.

"ONE TRAP WILL BE BAITED WITH ME."

PRINCE RANA RAJ SINGH, on a folded blanket, with his back to a rock in the moonlight, sat smoking endless cigarettes in silence. Quorn, borrowing a blanket, for a long time sat beside him, not even aware of privilege, so steeped he was in the spirit of true democracy that enjoys its own appreciation of the excellence of others.

He only wished the Rajput were not so taciturn; but there was compensation—his strength, his determination to do decently, his will to understand things' meaning, made his silence seem companionable. And when the Rajput spoke at last it was as if two parallel streams of thought had flowed into one channel, so that each understood how the other arrived at his point of view. There was no need for explanations.

"Those dacoits were misinformed."

"Sure, sir. It was me they was after—me and Asoka prob'ly. If they'd knowed which my tent was they'd ha' wrecked it."

"So it seems your trick succeeded. Narak has probably talked too soon, or to the wrong person."

"Weren't Narak with them?"

"No. Those were Lumding's men. We questioned one—thoroughly. Lumding is the acknowledged chief of all the dacoits. Narak, after his talk with you, sought to create dissension in the dacoit camp. He became insolent and rather reckless. He strutted like a peacock in front of the woman Usha and gave her all the earrings taken from the captured women. The prisoner says also that Lumding, learning from Narak's boasting what a magician you are, hoped to capture you and force you to make magic for him. You see, although it was the Rajah of Dumdumpore who persuaded them to invade our Ranee's territory, they don't trust him any more than they trust each other. They prefer magic."

"I've heard he's a terrible piece of cheese, sir."

"Dumdumpore is nothing without the woman Usha. She is the key to the situation—to his treachery and to the dacoits' plans, insofar as they have any genuine plans of their own."

"Where is Dumdumpore, sir?"

"Somewhere near where she is."

"And where is she?"

"God knows. But she is not far off. Our prisoner says that she has corrupted the quarrymen."

"I'd doubt that, sir, if I was you. Them quarrymen was bad eggs afore ever she came nigh enough to rot 'em."

"She has promised the quarrymen one year's pay apiece if they stand idle and let the Ranee be carried off. I have that from the foreman."

"Shows she's lackin' in business sense. Them guys 'ud stand idle all day for nothing. When is the Ranee coming, sir?"

"They looked into each other's eyes by moonlight. "She is here now," said Rana Raj Singh.

QUORN whistled—a strange little tune of his own that he used as accompaniment to astonished thought. He was even more astonished when the tune was answered by another that he knew equally well, liquid and merry, apparently from a group of rocks some fifty yards away. But he could see nobody; the rocks were heaped in glistening white confusion; there was room amid them for a regiment to hide.

"She is here with ten men and a dozen servants," said the Rajput.

"Sir, it ain't safe."

"And the dacoits' spies will undoubtedly send word that she has left Narada City."

"Sure. We'll have them dacoits down on us," Quorn agreed.

"So the Ranee must go back home at once," the other said with an air of finality.

"Sir, it tickles me to hear you say that. But can you or I or any one make her do it?"

"She will go to-morrow."

"Good."

"Nevertheless, she will remain here."

Quorn, stroking his chin with his fingers, turned that over in his mind a minute. Then he knocked the ashes from his pipe and thumbed in fresh tobacco.

"I get you, sir," he said as he struck the match. "But it's risky. What good will it do us?"

"None whatever if Lumding captures her. But if Narak does, that is another story. Narak is an ignorant savage who can't even speak the Ranee's language. Narak wishes to be the chief of all the dacoits. Narak has no respect for Lumding or for Dumdumpore. But he has tremendous respect for the woman Usha; and he knows it is Usha who wishes to capture the Ranee, so that she may deliver her to Dumdumpore, who would then put the Ranee to death by poison unless she consented to marry him.

"So, to have the Ranee in his possession would give Narak a means of bargaining with Usha, who could, if she would, use her influence to make Narak chief of all the dacoits. She could turn Lumding's own men against him. She could frighten Lumding into running away. She has a gruesome reputation as a worker of black magic."

"Do you mean, sir, that if some one was speaking English to Narak, he wouldn't even know it was English?"

"Not he. He would only know it was a language he did not understand."

"But, sir—that there female ain't no more like the Ranee than cayenne pepper is like a cool drink. He's going to know she ain't the Ranee, soon as she starts talking at him. 'Twon't make no scrap o' difference that he's ignorant of English; she don't need no

words to put her line o' goods across; she does it the same as a lemon does, by setting your teeth on edge. He's going to know he's caught a hot tomatater."

"What then? He will have said he has the Ranee. Why should he then admit to any one except himself that he has made a mistake? Lumding and Usha will believe it, so will Dumdum-pore; and his own spies in Lumding's camp will tell him they believe it. He can bargain for the chieftainship as easily with Mrs. Galway for a bait as he could if he had the real Ranee in his hands."

"Yeah—but Dumdum-pore and that woman Usha ain't crazy. They'll want to see her afore they come to terms."

"Undoubtedly. But Lumding, who is also a savage, will resent the challenge to his leadership. Lumding will fight."

"You believe he will go after Narak?" Quorn demanded.

"Why not? Instantly, without any hesitation. What else is there for him to do? As a chief, whose lieutenant has stolen the prize he was after, and whose men are invited to join the lieutenant in open mutiny, he must either fight, or else resign and not only be mocked, but probably also put to death by malcontents who have a grudge against him. So there will be civil war among the dacoits."

"Yes, sir, that sounds okay."

"Thus the dacoits will destroy one another—perhaps with some slight assistance from ourselves; but it is they who will do most of the dirty work."

"**H**OW about Dumdum-pore?" Quorn put in. "I'd liefer soak it to that sucker than to them ignorant savages. A dacoit, sir, is no worse than a wolf; he's ugly, but he

don't mean nothing by it. Usha, she's a woman, so we won't say nothing about her beyond that she's a devil and don't know manners. But Dumdum-pore has a salute o' seventeen guns. Them's seventeen reasons why that low-down son of a she-snake should be trod on."

"Let us hope," said Rana Raj Singh.

"Hope, sir? I've hoped for the moon when I was drunk enough. I've hoped Asoka wouldn't misbehave in public. Hope never got me nowheres."

"Dumdum-pore," said the prince, "might learn, if we use judgment, that the Ranee is really here, in our camp. He might learn that while the dacoits are fighting among themselves."

"And one trap," said a silvery voice, with a laugh, from a near-by shadow, "will be no worse for being baited with me myself in person."

The prince and Quorn sprang to their feet. The Ranee stepped into the moonlight, looking lovelier than Quorn had ever seen her, because the moon's rays glistened on the golden thread of her white silk *sari* and she shimmered in a golden glow. The dew on her sandals shone like diamonds.

In the faint mist she looked almost non-material, as if she were an apparition from an unseen universe. She was a reason why even an atheist had a right to believe in immortality, if only for one precious moment. Then she sat on the blanket that Quorn spread for her; he folded his own coat and sat on that, and they three formed a triangle, Quorn with his back to the moon.

"My men are on guard," said Rana Raj Singh.

"They are good men," said the Ranee. "I am grateful for their help

and for your protection. But do they not take things a little seriously?"

"We are in serious danger," said the Rajput.

"No, it is Dumdumpore who is in danger," she retorted. "He and Ben Quorn. Dumdumpore is a coward and there is no safety zone for cowards. Ben Quorn has to die and come to life again. If he should take that too seriously he might be a long time dead."

Quorn made a movement of suppressed impatience. Rana Raj Singh nodded. The Ranee chuckled, removing her sandals to wriggle her toes in the dew.

"And so you and your Rajputs, my prince, must be pleased to regard this as funny. Otherwise we may be all obliged to learn too soon what life is after death. It will be very interesting, doubtless, but it would be just as interesting later on if we are not in too much hurry."

"What's the hurry about me dyin', miss?" Quorn objected. "I ain't such a lovin' crittur that the gods 'ud want to see me die young. Nor I ain't crazy. I got a good job. What'd I want to lose that for and go to where there maybe ain't no elephants, nor no Ranee, nor no whisky and tobaccer?"

"Don't you understand that the priests of Narada will poison you sooner or later unless we make it much more profitable for them to preserve your life as long as possible?"

"Them suckers 'ud poison their mothers and blame it on you," Quorn grumbled.

"LISTEN," the Ranee said impressively. "They have said they will believe you are the Gunga *sahib* if you die to save my throne and come to life again. That was the prophecy. They have told that to all

Narada. One half of Narada believes in you, as I do. One half doesn't, because the priests have called you an impostor. Consequently, all Narada is on tiptoe, waiting for the miracle. If you succeed—"

"But who's to prove it?" Quorn objected.

"We have all these quarrymen and all the mahouts as impartial witnesses."

"Them liars? Huh—who'd believe 'em?"

"People will believe when they say you are dead, won't they?"

"Yeah—most folks believe bad news."

"And the priests will believe it eagerly."

"You bet."

"The priests will boast that you are dead."

"Suckers! I'll come back an' haunt 'em!"

"You will do better than that. You will come back alive, on your elephant Asoka, and the priests will either have to eat their own boasting or else admit you are the veritable Gunga *sahib*. After which, they must preserve your life as long as possible, for the sake of their own reputation as custodians of sacred legend."

"Yeah, miss, that sounds okay. How about, though, if them dacoits puts it over on me an' I croak? I ain't the Gunga *sahib*. I ain't sacred. I can't work no miracles. I ain't so sure but what there may be something in this here theory o' being born and dying and coming to life again maybe a thousand times—"

"Many million times," the Ranee interrupted.

"Well, I dunno. What I do know is, I don't remember any past lives and I can't see ahead and prophesy no future ones. So I'm a sucker if I chuck

away this here life, which ain't so troublesome but what I like it A-I most o' the time."

"You are quite right, Mr. Quorn," said Rana Raj Singh. "Each life as we live it is the one to think about."

"All right. What then if a dacoit ups an' sticks a jabber in me?"

"Nothing," said the Ranee. "Only then you and I would have to wait until the next life we live on earth together, to finish the work that we began together, that is all. I wonder what you did in former lives to cause you to be punished by being so blind in this one. I was always Sankyamuni, you were always Gunga, and we always had the elephant. I can never remember all of it, but I get lots of little flashes."

"Well," said Quorn, "I'll tell you, miss. I'm maybe blind and I'm maybe stoopid. And my mother was a lady what did scrubbing for the saloon-keepers' wives in Philadelphia. That's me. That's the 'me' what I know. I ain't a handsome guy. I likes my likker. I don't hold with no bettin' on future lives nor with claiming I was some one special in days gone by. I hanker after peace in this here life. But I'm for you."

"You're a bag o' mischief, but you're bright, and you look awful sweet to me. You're wiser than what I am and you're on the level—specially when it comes to standing by your friends. So I'll stand by you." He knocked his pipe out on the rock; it was like a hammer recording a final bid. "If there's anything I can do to help you play your game, you count on me to do it—with all my might."

"You are a—" The Ranee's voice quavered a half-note; it took her a moment to recover. "You are a dear. But how strange that you can't remember? Nobody but the veritable Gunga

sahib could have talked to me like that."

"Them priests," Quorn began, but Rana Raj Singh interrupted him.

"Let the priests wait. We have dacoits to deal with."

"And Mrs. Galway," said the Ranee.

"WELL," said Quorn, "I left your clothes in my tent, miss."

Them is all she's got, unless she elects to look more sporty in a night-shift. My belief is she will want to make herself look snooty, for to find out why I cuddled her a while back. 'Tain't a going to be no picnic. She's a woman with a will. I seen her legs—and they weren't bad-looking, neither. She'll figure any man as did that ought to marry her, I reckon."

"Why not?" asked the Ranee.

"'Cause, miss, there is limits. Death is something we don't know about, so we can face it. But I've seen poor suckers who had to live with her sort."

"You might pretend," said the Rana Raj Singh.

"Me, sir? Maybe *you* could do it."

Instantly the Ranee went into a gale of giggles. For a minute she could only seize her Rajput's hand; she had no breath for speech that any one could make head or tail of. But at last she forced words into sequence:

"You!" she said. "Of course, you! She doesn't know you. You don't know her. You pretend that you think she is me! You must ride to her tent in the morning—see her in my clothes—and turn aside at once because she has no veil. She has probably heard that I never wear a veil, but she has probably also heard that I scandalize all old-fashioned people by not wearing one; and anyhow, Mr. Quorn can tell her that. You choose one of your

Rajputs who knows no English and send him to present your respectful compliments. Mr. Quorn acts as interpreter. Oh, this is perfect!"

"But what will I tell her?" asked Quorn.

"You must tell her that my Prince Rana Raj Singh is the Rajah of Dumdum-pore, who proposes to carry her off and have her for his thirty-second concubine!"

"Hell's bells! She'll want to marry me to save herself!" Quorn objected.

"Not she! She will be thrilled more than she ever was in her whole life," said the Ranee. "She will insist on running away at once. Probably she will believe that her pleased excitement is genuine eagerness to escape from such a dreadful prospect. But deep in her heart she will hope he will follow and overtake her."

"Who is to help her to run?" Quorn asked. "She can't travel alone."

"Bamjee!"

"He'll be too scared."

"I will promise Bamjee anything in reason."

"He ain't reasonable."

"I will promise anything he asks for."

"He will ask for money," said Quorn. "That *babu* will do anything for money, excep' actually run out on you, miss, though he'll creep as close to doing that as he can shave a profit out of."

"You are quite right, Mr. Quorn," said the Rana Raj Singh. "We can count on Bamjee, though his services may be expensive. The Ranee must count on you and me to do the rest. We will succeed, if I can be as brave as you are."

"Hear that guy talk!" Quorn muttered to himself. "Them princes has manners, whatever else. That means

I'm going to have to take all chances, so's not to look like ten cents to his dollar. Gee, I wish I was in Philadelphia. But I ain't. So here goes."

CHAPTER X.

"FOR A LADY SUCH AS YOU ARE,
THEY'D DRAW LOTS."

QUORN talked with the Ranee and Rana Raj Singh until the angle of the moon reminded the latter it was time to relieve the ring of sentries he had posted. The conversation was involved and intimate. Though they three trusted one another, even so habit asserted itself and a stranger overhearing them could hardly have understood their purpose and the plan they evolved in intricate detail, so oblique was their approach to it.

The Ranee now and then was forthright; energy exploded and forced plain speech; but the prince became more and more taciturn as they groped their way into the depths of intrigue; he hinted; he said very little that could have been held against him. Quorn took example from him.

They might have been enemies trying to reach a basis for negotiations. But the truth was, they were anxious not to limit one another by suggesting that any proposal that one or the other disliked was something to be literally carried out.

When Quorn at last swung up behind Rana Raj Singh's saddle and was presently dropped beside Asoka's stall, he understood the problem in all its bearings as well as the intricate means by which it should be solved, but he knew he was free to do exactly as he pleased in an emergency and that the others would not only trust him, but would instantly change their plans as

far as possible to fit with any unexpected move on his part.

That is the secret of so-called oriental subtlety. It refuses to be limited or to limit others by so-called facts, which every one in the Orient knows may change into something else at any moment.

It was when the Rajput had ridden off into the night that Quorn began to peg himself down, like a chess player, to a definite line of assault on the da-coits, move by move.

He almost never trusted himself to pass final judgment until he sat beside Asoka. There was something natural and almost limitless about the enormous animal, his restful swaying and his interested sampling of the midnight smells; it made for clear thinking.

Superstitious in the ordinary meaning Quorn was not; but his ability to foresee and to reason when he had Asoka near him, amounted almost to the same thing. He slept while Asoka slept.

He awoke when Asoka did. He roused the mahouts with a pitchfork prong to set the hot cakes cooking and send the shivering grass-cutters to work. And at peep o' day he was smoking, on a stool beside his own tent, waiting for Mrs. Galway's anger to come nagging querulously through the tent flies.

He had to wait a long time, but he waited. There were strange sounds within there and he was glad he had left her his two-foot mirror, because he heard what could be nothing else than chuckling.

He could hear her trying on the Ranee's garments, and it seemed that she liked what she saw in the glass. She was unexpectedly, incredibly good-tempered. Even when she shouted at last for Bamjee to order the cook to

bring her breakfast, she was only moderately unkind:

"I trust your sense of duty has not totally vanished? I hope you don't propose to let me die of hunger? Is the stuff the cook calls coffee ready? I suppose I will have to eat hard-boiled eggs again and that the butter will taste like margarine, but I am learning not to expect my likes to be considered." Then, at the top of her lungs; "Bring my breakfast."

SHE emerged from the tent as two men carried up a makeshift table, her own having gone to smithereens last night beneath Asoka's forefoot. And she stood with a critical frown to observe how they spread the tablecloth and laid the cutlery and plates that had been borrowed from Quorn's plebeian outfit.

But that was only a pretense—Quorn knew it. He understood perfectly. She was grimly suppressing delight in herself clad in the scented silken garments that tickled her vanity more than anything that she had ever worn.

Probably she had never looked so nearly presentable. Not even vinegary feelings and a morbid view of other people's sins could undo symmetry and flowing line. The colors suited her. The *sari* stole the hardness from her face, so that her critical eyes looked almost kind and the exacting corners of her mouth seemed almost guilty of good humor. Bamjee sized her up in half a second and *salaamed* with his forehead almost to the ground.

"*Sahiba*, so much loveliness will blind these eyes!"

"Huh! Fulsome flattery won't make me overlook last night's disgraceful doings!" she retorted. But she was pleased; she had never before been flattered by the shovelful, without an

observant woman near to cause her to feel ridiculous. Quorn took his cue from Bamjee.

"Have to hand it to yer, miss. Some fixin's, I'll say. Suit yer to a T. Say, wouldn't you just knock their eyes out back home!"

"Nonsense!"

"Wish I may die if I don't mean it."

"These are your plates and so on, I suppose. Have you had breakfast?"

"No, miss."

Blandly, with an air of patronizing grace, she tripped into the net that Quorn had spent a long night fashioning from such stray thoughts as came to him. Over the way Asoka tossed his trunk to scatter hay-wisps on his back, but it looked like a triumphant signal and a laugh when she invited Quorn to breakfast.

He had counted on her doing that; there is a witchery of breakfasting beneath a blue sky when the birds are singing, even if the coffee is nothing to brag about. He did not dare to forego the least advantage. He depended on eating breakfast with her.

"Supposing them dacoits was to see you," he said. "Them suckers 'u'd carry you off as sure as they'd kill the rest of us. They'd think you was the Ranee. I ain't joking. They sure would."

She enjoyed it, but she bridled for the sake of modesty. "I don't believe there are any dacoits. After breakfast I intend to search the quarters of those quarrymen. I shall be much surprised if I don't find some of my belongings in there. There was an elephant; but that might easily have been one of our elephants."

"Meaning you accuse me, miss?"

"They could use one of your elephants, could they not? I accuse you

of having given me something to drink that I would rather die than touch."

"Miss, that was medicine."

SHE disbelieved him, but her eyes betrayed that she was grateful for the lie. "I must hope you are telling the truth. But you don't look to me like a truthful man."

Quorn judged it time to begin to take the upper hand: "Miss, I'm a first-class liar when it comes to not remembering things I've seen, what some one hopes I didn't see. I'd lie like the devil to hide a woman's embarrassment."

"I fear I was dreadfully sick last night. I have a slight headache now."

"Miss, if I didn't know better I'd swear you was drunk."

"I am glad you know better than that." She quickly changed the subject. "But you don't know me if you hope to make me believe in your dacoits. I shall sue the Ranee of Narada for the value of my belongings. Unless she offers me a sincere apology, I shall sue her for damages also. They were her laborers who attacked me in the night. I am sure of it."

"Miss, not only was them devils dacoits, but they thought you was the Ranee o' Narada, and if they'd found you they'd have carried you off as sure as my name's Quorn. Why, miss, I'll show you dead ones, soon as you've had breakfast. I don't want to turn your stummick or I'd show 'em to you now. I've been a wondering all night how you'd ha' behaved if they'd ha' caught you."

"Why should they raid my camp?"

"Because, miss, they believed it is the Ranee's camp—and if they catch her, she's worth money. Lots of it. You see, it's known the Ranee travels light. She's known to be a daring

young woman, who laughs at a lot o' the old-time customs. And it's known she intends to visit this here place, for to see how the quarrying's coming along."

"I sincerely hope she will come. I would like to meet her. I will give her a piece of my mind. I will stay here until she does come."

"Suit yourself, miss. You may have the loan o' my tent. But I was thinking, if the dacoits was to come again—"

"Why should they?"

"Spies, miss. I don't doubt their spies are lurking in the long grass. They'll have seen you. Any one who sees you dressed like that, a looking like a queen out of a story-book, can't be blamed for running to the dacoit camp and telling 'em you're the Ranee o' Narada. Why shouldn't they come—and you all unprotected?"

"Are you serious? Do you really mean I am in danger?"

"All that dangerous I never slep' a wink for wondering what you'd best do if they comes and ketches you. There's only one thing, miss, you could do; and that's pretend to 'em you *are* the Ranee. That way they'd keep you alive for ransom. If they was to find out you ain't the Ranee they'd kill you, if you was lucky. If you wasn't—"

"What?"

"Them guys have harems."

"Polygamy?"

"Yes, indeed, ma'am."

"Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Quorn, that there are men to-day in India who would dare to kidnap an American lady and—"

"You can't imagine. Ma'am, they wouldn't stop to think twice. Mostly they holds auctions o' their prisoners. But for a lady such as you are, they'd draw lots. That is, unless they thought

you was the Ranee; in which case they'd figure they could sell you for more money to the Rajah of Dumdum-pore than they'd care to lose by staging a debauch. You get me?"

"The Rajah of Dumdum-pore? What has he to do with dacoits?"

"He employs 'em, ma'am."

"GOOD heavens! What kind of person is he?"

"The kind o' person what hires hellions to do his dirt. He's good to look at. He looks like one o' them sultans on a pickle-bottle label. First glance, you'd say he was that bold he'd take a tiger by the short hair. But that's all bluff; he can't say boo to his own shadder. So, seeing he wants the Ranee o' Narada for his harem, he has hired these here dacoits to ketch her for him."

"Is he leading them in person?"

"No, ma'am, he ain't that fond o' taking risks. He's all that surreptitious that he hasn't ever seen the Ranee. He's only heard she's a good looker, and he craves her kingdom and her money, which he figures might be had by clapping her into his harem and crushing her pretty toes with a ingenious device until she signs a paper saying she's his willing wife. You see, ma'am, marriage is all politics in these here parts, and politics ain't all they ought to be."

"But how did you learn all this?"

Quorn avoided answering that question, fearful of becoming too involved in skeins of imagination. "You should ha' wised yourself afore you came high-handed, and no permit, into a State where tourists ain't allowed," he answered. "There ain't nobody but me can help you now; and I can't do no more than give you good advice."

She smiled, so archly that Quorn's blood ran cold: "Since last night we are under obligations to each other. I hope I can count on your discretion."

"Ma'am, it's you what has to be discreet. If Bamjee can smuggle you back to Narada City, there's a chance that the British Resident might get back from Delhi in time to give you an escort to the railway line. If not, you're liable to have to use your wits. Supposing them dacoits *should* ketch you, kid 'em you're the Ranee o' Narada. They won't know no better.

"If you act discreet, they'll sell you to the Rajah of Dumdumpore; and by that time maybe I can get a telegram through to the British Government. There's some things can be said against the British, but they don't hold with letting no lady-tourists stay in a rajah's harem longer than it takes to send a airplane and teach him manners."

"Oh, I can't ride in those things. They make me ill. I've been up once. Nothing would ever persuade me—"

"Ma'am, them air-force fellers has a way with 'em. They'd take yer. Don't you worry. Mind, now, if the Rajah of Dumdumpore should see you—you're the Ranee o' Narada. Get that? Don't forget it . . . Oh, my God!"

"What?"

"That's him coming!"

Opportunely, from behind the hill at the back of the elephant lines, alone, on a beautiful bay mare, rode Rana Raj Singh. His black beard was brushed fiercely upward. His mustache bristled. His hot-mustard-colored turban had been pushed down low over his eyes. His shoulders were slightly hunched, as a man's might be who sought to do by treachery what nobler ruffians would do by force. He reined

in, stared and then wheeled suddenly and rode away.

"There you are, ma'am. Now you've seen him. And he's seen you."

"But what a handsome man!"

"Ma'am, handsome is as handsome does. He's that ornery he's plumb unnatural. Do you know what? Do you know why he didn't ride forward? He's like all them Bluebeards, he's old-fashioned. He's shocked half out of his senses 'cause he seed you in the open without your veil on!"

NOW came a Rajput riding on a gray horse, using his right hand to cover his eyes, although he stared between his fingers. He dismounted, salaamed, then covered his eyes again.

"This, ma'am, will be his servant. You're in danger. I'd best kid the sucker you're the Ranee, hadn't I?"

"You know best. I can only hope you're right to—"

"Ma'am, it's almost wrong to be as right as I am. It makes you feel pre—what's the word?—presumshus."

Followed conversation in a language of which Mrs. Galway understood not one word. At last the Rajput bowed, walked his horse to a respectful distance, mounted and rode away.

"Ma'am, the pepper is in the hash and no mistake," said Quorn. "That sucker admits he knows all about last night's raid on your camp. What he wants to know is that you're here. Nex' thing you'll have his dacoits down on you again."

"Then why not tell him I am not the Ranee?"

"Because then, ma'am, he would tell the dacoits you are not the Ranee. You'd be their meat. They would come and get yer just the same. Only, knowing they had no market for you, they

would draw lots for you among 'emselfs and you would have to be a dacoit's mistress. How would you fancy that?"

"But wouldn't the British government interfere?"

"A fat chance! In among them mountains? Hell's bells!" It 'ud take all their airplanes and a year o' time to find an army among them rocks an' jungles."

"I will go back to Narada at once then. Will you lend me that big elephant?"

"No, ma'am. You may have that littlest one at the far end o' the line. She's gentle and she can move fast."

"Oh, dear, I know the ride on an elephant will upset me. Isn't there a place where I could hide?"

"Bamjee might know of a place, ma'am. Shall I fetch him?"

BAMJEE was not difficult to find—he had been listening behind the tent. But Quorn walked to some little distance away and waited for him behind a rock. He wanted privacy.

"You sucker, are you all set?"

"*Sahib*, I am afraid."

"Have you been talking to the Ranee?"

"No, *sahib*. For two whole hours, until daybreak, her highness did me the honor of talking to me. I listened."

"Then you know what's what. Go to it."

"*Sahib*, I am terribly afraid. It is simple—oh, so simple to get caught by dacoits. But to get uncaught—!"

"Did she promise you money?"

"Yes, *sahib*. But to a dead man, money—"

"Are you all that skeered you couldn't feel if I should swat you?" Quorn asked.

"No, no, *sahib*, not that!"

"Do you kid yourself I won't swat you, if you run out on what the Ranee says for you to do?"

"But you and I are good friends—"

"Hell's bells, I ain't no friend o' yeller men! I like a guy wi' nerve. See here now, Bamjee: me and you have pulled off more'n one job that was pretty nigh as dangerous as this one, and I ain't denying that you always done your full share. But that don't prove nothing excep' that you've got to keep on doing it. You get me?"

"But I have a wife and children."

"So you always had, you sucker."

"And there are limits—"

"No, there ain't. What's more, there ain't no limit to my contemp' for a guy that 'ud go green when he's counted on. You take that tourist agency o' yours and park it in a hiding-place and get it caught good by Narak—do you get me? And you keep on kidding Narak she's the Ranee—do you get that? And you count on us to get you out o' the mess, knowing not one of us ever went back on a friend—do you get that? After it's all over me an' you'll shake hands—so be no harm comes to that young elephant. Remember: that young elephant is in your charge and you're responsible."

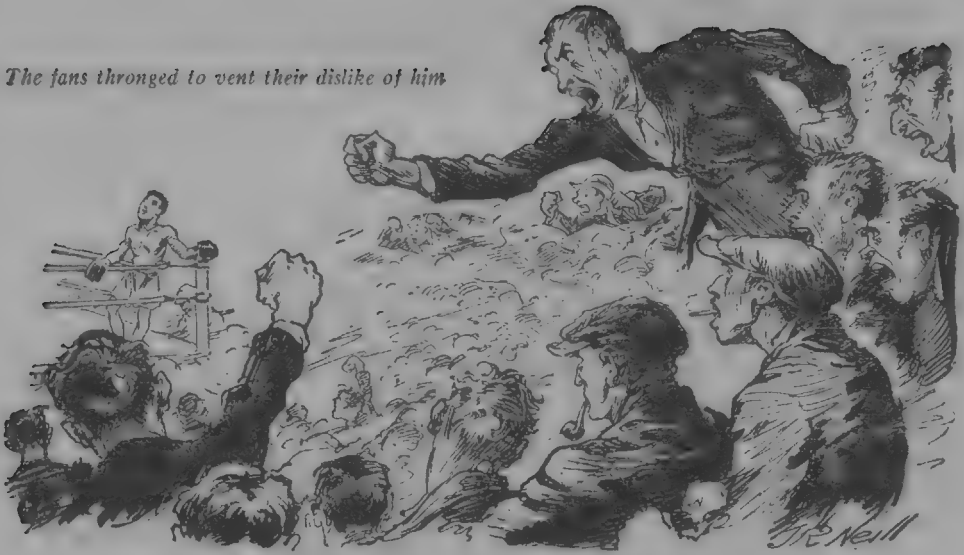
"But the Galway *sahiba* is also in my charge. If harm should come to her—"

"Hell's bells—you can't kill her kind. The Almighty made 'em rugged, so's they could endure their own company."

"Oh, why was I born?" wailed Bamjee.

"Just for this, my little man. You do your job right. Then you'll maybe get trusted to do the nex' one. Go to it."

The fans thronged to vent their dislike of him



The Bronx Cheer

Neither Gib Glover nor his manager really knew what trouble was till Gib tried out his bright idea on the fight fans

By JAMES W. EGAN

EXCUSE me while I snort. I been readin' in a newspaper where some mitt critic claims that fighters is a improved breed since the time Bat Nelson scrapped more 'rounds in a day than modern titleholders do in a year. This newspaper guy says modern fighters wear good clothes, brush their teeth twice a day, often glance at books outside the telephone directory, and don't gargle coffee from a saucer any more. Summin' it all up, he opines boxers ain't as dumb as they used to be.

No, most o' the leather pushers ain't as dumb as they was. They're dumber! Suppose you dial in on me, seein' that Check and Double Check is off the air to-night, and get a truckload o' Gib Glover, whose career will likely prove

that the best use yet discovered for a fighter's head is buttin' a opponent in a clinch.

I found Glover, a husky young light-heavy, out on the Pacific Coast. He was starrin' in the prelims and drivin' a grocery wagon on the side. He struck me as a likely prospect, so I got him to quit the back door deliverin' and join my fight stable. The lad told me he was kinda ambitious to go places in the leather trade.

"O. K.!" I says. "You listen to old Harry Cheek and maybe you will. Remember, I'll always do the thinkin'. You do the fightin'."

I brought him along for nearly a year. He reached the point o' bein' a main eventer in some o' the Coast burgs. Though he won a few scuffles,

he was no howlin' gate attraction. He was tough and game, but not a knocker-out. His best punch was a left hook I hoped to develop into a killin' weapon some day.

With Louie Rocco, a lightie, and Glover in tow, I drifted into Cascade City, where both boys was to appear on the same card. Gib was gettin' the top shot against a local favorite named Lee.

A couple o' nights previous to the smoker a wrestlin' show was staged in the Coliseum, the sport arena o' the town. I took Gib, who'd never laid eyes on a grapplin' match. The hall was jammed with customers. My fighter frowned thoughtfully at the size o' the crowd.

Together we watched a big squeezer called "Rough-house" Ripley slap and kick and rabbit-punch another bone-crusher until the fans was frantic. Ripley was booed and razzed every minute o' the bout. Even when he won the decidin' fall he got a lusty "Bronx cheer."

After the gruntin' and groanin' was over we was joined by Dan Metcalf, a sport-writin' acquaintance o' mine who was writin' up the party. He winked at me.

"Some exhibition!" he cracks. "Ripley and his rough stuff sure pack in the suckers! He's a great drawing card, that bad actor."

"Drawin' card?" Glover breaks in. "He was razzed terrible!"

"Sure!" Metcalf grins. "The fans come to ride Ripley. They want to see him flopped, and flopped hard. He seldom does, but they're always hoping—and paying dough to boo him. Off the mat Rip's a nice guy. Yet he knows hate and hisses yield bigger dividends than love and kisses. He deliberately puts on the rough stuff to earn the dis-

like of the fans. And it means money in the bank for him."

Gib Glover went back to our hotel with a sort o' determined look on his pan. He behaved like a guy who'd just made up his mind about somethin'—or whatever it is a fighter uses for a mind.

OUR boxin' didn't pull as big a mob to the Coliseum as the wrestlin', but it wasn't a bad showin'. Dave Lee, Gib's opponent in the closin' clash, drew a big hand from the fans. Not so much applause was donated Glover. I was surprised to see my light-heavy throw a scornful look at the crowd and then settle onto his stool and scowl over at the dark, black-chested Lee. This attitude was unusual.

The referee called the men to the center o' the ring. He ordered them to shake hands before the bell and come out fightin'. Dave Lee stuck forth his glove. Gib slapped it aside roughly. A gallery god booed. Lee's supporters took it up.

"What's wrong, kid?" I asks, on his return to the corner.

"Who the heck said anythin' was wrong?" He jolts me.

The gong clanged. I received plenty o' jolts that first round, and the next two. Glover was battlin' viciously. He roughed up Lee in the clinches and growled at the referee's warnin's. He wasn't really fightin' dirty, but from where they sat I knew the fans might think he was. His treatment of the local boy didn't endear him to the house. Booin' increased.

My brawler and Lee was tanglin' in the middle o' the ring at the bell endin' the third chapter. Lee started to drop his dukes, but Gib kept right on sockin'. The referee had to jump in

and chase him to the corner. Raspberries was showered on Glover as he stretched on the stool. He straightened, made a face at the public. Them raspberries got the size of loganberries.

O' course, by this time I'd tumbled. But I whispered nothin' beyond curt advice as I readied Gib for the fourth semester.

Lee attempted a flurry in the fourth, which was over soon. Glover commenced hurlin' his left to the body. It was plain as finger-prints on a guest towel that the black-haired battler failed to enjoy them stomach pokes. Just before the gong Gib whipped a savage right hook close to the belt line. Lee winced, sunk to his knees. The bell pealed. The referee shoved Glover away.

"Low! Low!" yelled a number o' customers.

Gib paused *en route* to the corner and glowered at 'em.

"Yaa-ah!" he squawked, and was booed roundly.

"Keep hookin' that left to the belly," I says, handin' Gib the water bottle. "He don't crave that cellar sockin'."

The bottle gurgled at my boy's lips. He filled his trap full and abruptly let the flood fly, almost drownin' a couple o' razzin' deadheads in the press row beneath. Maybe that didn't lather them!

"How they hope Lee knocks you stiff!" I warbles. "You sure are winnin' the hearts o' the fans to-night, kid!"

The gong clanged for the fifth. Gib tore off the stool and rushed Lee. With both mitts he whaled at the body. Lee tried to cover his basement. Glover switched the attack upstairs. Lee busied himself protectin' his chin now

and left his soft spot unguarded. Gib stepped in with a savage left to the kitchen. Lee spilled to the canvas, writhin' in pain.

"Foul!" was the cry raised. "Foul, foul!"

Lucky for us, the referee was fair and square. He seen the wallop same as me—a clean blow to the pit o' the stomach. Unheedin' the squawks o' the crowd and Lee's handlers, he counted out the victim and lifted my fighter's dukes.

Yet while Glover was the victor, he left the ring amid jeers. The defeated Lee got a fine hand.

"Well, my bright lad," I says later, "I trust you're satisfied. Yeah, I'm on! You took a tip from Ripley, the big wrestlin' performer, and have gone in for crowd displeasin'. I ain't so hot for the idea. Boxin' and wrestlin' is different pastimes."

"But human nature is the same, Harry," Gib retorts. "Fight fans are able to hate, too. I figure I made a swell start to-night. Now customers will pay for the privilege o' booin' me. Why shouldn't I cash in on the Bronx cheer like the wrestlers do?"

"But it don't matter to a wrestler if he wins or loses," I chirps. "A fighter has to win most o' the time or he's done."

"Well, Harry," he comes back, "I intend to be a unpopular winner, not a unpopular loser. I figure my left hook to the body can be improved and cop plenty o' scuffles. And it's the punch which fits in nicely with my plans."

"Your plans, huh?" I growls. "Ain't I supposed to do the thinkin' for this partnership? I doubt we'll get another main event for you in Cascade City!"

For once I found myself wrong.

George Franklin, the promoter, hustled to sign Gib up for a return shot with Lee. Glover stopped him in a rough go, amid just as many yowls as before.

SIX months and a number o' gruelin' slugfests later Gib was bein' mentioned among contenders for the light-heavy title. A quick one-round knock-out o' "Toughy" Townsend, pride o' Los Angeles, finally sent us hopscotchin' eastward. We'd been offered a ten-round tussle with "Gorilla" Blott in Mammothville. Blott was a threat to Champion Benny Lavine's title. He was a veteran and nobody's palooka. In addition, he bore the rep o' bein' anythin' except the cleanest battler in the game. He wasn't no more popular with the fans in the East than Gib was with those o' the West.

Yes, dear friends o' Static-land, Glover received a lungful o' Hackensack huzzas every time he crushed ring rosin. The fans paid and paid to vent their loud dislike o' him. I had to admit Gib's tactics drew the doubloons. In fact, I was almost on the point o' tabbin' him the smartest fighter I ever piloted.

With prospects lookin' rosy as a fresh slice o' Puget Sound-salmon, we arrived in Mammothville. Two days later we ran into Snow. I ain't rëferrin' to the weather, for it was the sunny season o' the year. This turned out to be a lot more serious than what the weather man might dish up.

NOW Snow was the last name of a society blossom who fronted it with the gaudy label o' Delphine. This Snow damsel didn't appear as cold as her name. She was a willowy fluff, kinda Spanish in type, with big

dark eyes and unbobbed hair. Very rich, refined and Ritzy, I gathered.

Gib Glover and me encountered Miss Snow accidental. The two of us was in Matchmaker McClary's office at the Garden when she drifted in with a couple of other high-toned hotsies, sellin' tickets to a charity benefit. Seems they was tryin' to raise a fund for starvin' icemen or somethin' like that.

The moment Gib laid lamps on Delphine Snow he was a changed guy. Long's I'd handled him he'd wasted little time dallyin' with the dolls. But the Snow frail clicked, where a hundred blondes and brunettes, fully as pretty, had failed to cause a dent. Gib was no lad to throw away his dough, yet he would 've bought all her charity tickets if she'd let him.

Funny part of it was, Miss Snow showed a bit of interest in my fighter. Her and him got guffin' and finally exchanged addresses. It loomed up like the beginnin' of a more or less beautiful friendship. She even promised to visit our trainin' camp in Jersey, for which we were headin' next day.

What's more, Miss Snow did. She drove to the camp four or five times in a shinin' car, usually fetchin' a Ritzy friend or two. Once she come all alone. I couldn't figure out whether she was actually a trifle awash over the youngster, or if it was merely a new excitement she wanted to play with.

It worried me, too. I would 've liked to have flapped a "no trespassin'" sign in her pretty face. Gib was gettin' groggier every visit. The evenin' after she dropped in alone I found him very serious.

"Somethin' frettin' you?" I asks. "I bet it ain't Gorilla Blott, which it should be!"

"Harry," he says, slowly, "Delphine's been readin' a lot o' newspaper hoovey about me. Told me to-night. You know, stuff about me and Blott bein' a pair o' the dirtiest brawlers in the biz. Naturally she can't understand such stories. She considers me—well, a gentleman. And it's important to me that she keeps her present opinion. I've gotta quit bein' a ring ruffian!"

"Don't be dumb!" I squawks. "You'll need all your roughneck tactics against Gorilla. Anyway, how can you blame the newspaper boys for tellin' what everybody thinks about you? I thought you had some sense, kid, but I guess I been overratin' you. You oughta know that society belles like Miss Snow don't tie up permanent with prize fighters."

"It has been done," he says, stubborn. "I'm makin' good money, Harry, and I'm ambitious. I intend to win the light-heavy title before I'm through. Then, maybe—"

"Before you win any titles, Gorilla Blott has to be licked," I says. "That's your job right now. McClary might match you with Benny Lavine if you knock over Gorilla. The Gorilla is the hardest mug you've been stacked up against yet."

WE broke camp twenty-four hours before the bout. Gib issued a final statement to the sports writers. He swore he would do his best to win the victory, fightin' clean and aboveboard.

The sober, earnest way he spouted this annoyed me. I also was irked further by the fact him and me was due to celebrate our return to the big village by decoratin' a afternoon tea given by no less than Miss Delphine Snow. Naturally, Gib had grabbed at

the bid. I couldn't duck out, so I went along to make sure the kid didn't overload himself with Oolong.

For me, the afternoon proved about as comfortable as a date with a dentist. I got no fun outa bein' orb'd by a gang o' Elegant Eddies and Ednas, or inhalin' thimbles o' tea and mosquito-sized sandwiches. I doubt if Gib was at ease in this swell drum, either. Several times I noticed him starin' at the scenery. It would 've took a big slice of a Dempsey gate to furnish a hut like this.

When it was nearly time to bow out, the hostess corralled Gib and me at a tiny table for a few private words.

"I hardly ever attend fights, but I'm going to the Garden to-morrow night," says Miss Snow. "My cousin, Johnny Snow, is taking me. He goes all the time and understands fighting thoroughly. I plan to make a wager on the contest, too. I'll back you to win with my monthly allowance, Gibson."

"You mean, bet on me?" Gib says. "You mustn't do that, Miss Snow!"

"Why not?" The *femme* raises her dark eyebrows. "You expect to win, don't you?"

"I expect to do my best, and I hope to win, o' course," he answers. "Still, it's my first bout in Mammothville, and anythin' may happen. I'd hate to have you risk very much money on me, Miss Snow."

"Yeah," I cracks, half kiddin', "it's liable to get him nervous and he's enough on his mind now."

"Oh, I see," she says. Her tone sounds a little queer to me, and perhaps a trifle cold. Soon after that the party busts up.

"What do you care if she lays a few dimes on you, kid?" I asks Gib on the way hotelward. "In case you lost she'd never miss 'em."

"It wouldn't make her feel kinder toward me, though," the chump mumbles. "And I ain't entirely a cinch to win you know."

I burned him up for that, but I realized Blott was genuine opposition. As a matter o' fact, Gorilla entered the ring the followin' night a 7 to 5 favorite in the bettin'.

THE Garden wasn't jammed for the scuffle; however, it was a very good house. The fans give Gib Glover a generous hand. Mingled applause and boos welcomed the appearance o' Gorilla Blott. He scowled out over the ropes, and the jeerin' increased. Gorilla sure looked like he'd been dragged from a African jungle. His map would cause you to swear he was continually makin' faces at himself.

The first round wasn't thirty seconds spent before I seen I had a stranger carryin' my colors. Gib Glover skipped around and sparred. He was shootin' both hands in high, light blows. No rough stuff at all. No glarin' at the fans, no mussin' up the other guy in the clinches, smilin' and breakin' clean at the referee's command. Meanwhile, Blott was ridin' easy. The openin' chapter was pretty dull and unexcitin'.

I scorched Gib during the intermission. Yet he ambled forth in the second semester, tryin' to punch and be polite at the same time. That was no way to fight Gorilla, who started cuttin' loose in this round. He roughed Gib plenty, heelin', buttin', and bendin' his back across the hemp. He tossed gloves from all angles, careless o' where they landed. Several o' them was low.

Five seconds before the gong Blott fouled my fighter with a savage right inches below the belt. Glover

dropped, his features twisted in pain. Cries o' "Foul!" rang through the arena. The referee hesitated, then begun to count. The bell pealed.

Louie Rocco and me dragged Gib to the corner, squawkin' as we worked over him. Fortunately, the wallop had been a bit glancin' and Glover's superb condition enabled him to recover rapidly. He was in fair shape as the timekeeper clanged the third round.

A storm o' hoots and howls greeted Gorilla Blott as he come out. The referee likewise was booed lustily. The crowd's sympathy was all with Glover, and he got more cheers and applause than he'd ever heard in his life. Louie Rocco and me glanced at one another. It was hard for us to get used to the fans pulling for Gib.

DURING the third, fourth and fifth rounds the Hoboken hurrahs and spleen o' the mob was showered on Blott. Everybody in the Garden seemed rootin' for my fighter. He'd grown popular as a sportin' editor with a pocketful o' passes.

Notwithstandin' the encouragement, Gib was losin' the fight. With the abandonment o' his customary roughneck style, the fire had gone out o' his attack. He was boxin' instead o' fightin'. Admittin' that foul of the Gorilla's in the second had slowed him somewhat, I yet refused to blame it for his bum showin'. And my efforts to snap up Gib got no place.

Early in the sixth stanza Gorilla rushed Gib to the ropes. He was bangin' away with both mitts when my boy planted a straight right flush on his mouth. The sock cut Blott's lower lip and staggered him. Undoubtedly it was Glover's best punch o' the night. The fans yelled approval.

Gorilla snarled, spat blood. He tore

at Gib, flailin' rights and lefts. A wild wallop, similar to that o' the second round, only harder, caught Glover in forbidden territory. My fighter fell to the canvas, rollin' in agony.

The referee seen it this time. He did the square thing by us. He awarded Gib Glover the battle on a foul. Hundreds o' bugs stood up and razzed Gorilla Blott until him and his handlers had vanished from sight. Gib was cheered to the echo as we packed him to the dressin' room.

"Always heard Blott was a dirty scrapper," says Louie Rocco, while a sawbones is examinin' Glover. "Now I know it."

"We're lucky to win on a foul," I mutters. "Gorilla was lickin' the kid. Gib fought terrible."

"He wasn't so good," confesses Louie. "Had the whole crowd behind him, too. He used to show a heck of a lot better with the crowd against him, Harry."

"Yeah," I says, thinkin' o' plenty things, includin' Miss Delphine Snow. I wondered how she enjoyed the brawl.

A GOOD night's rest fixed up Gib fairly well. He was almost himself the next mornin'. Around noon he called Miss Snow on the phone. I was in the adjoinin' room, scannin' the papers, and didn't grab none o' his conversation. So I was a bit shocked when he walked in on me. His pan was pale, his glims burnin' luridly.

"What's the matter?" I demands. "Ain't the society bud pleased by the result o' the fight?"

"It seems, Harry," is his grim answer, "that Miss Snow and me don't understand each other. Guess we never did. You recall a bet bein' mentioned at the Pekoe party day before yester-

day? Well, she did gamble some cash. On Gorilla Blott!"

"On Gorilla?" I gasps.

"Correct! She drew some dizzy conclusions from our chat, and reported everythin' to her cousin Johnny. You know, the gazooney who figures he's smarted up on the ring racket. He told her all fighters is crooked, and no doubt the bout was fixed for Gorilla to win. He convinced her my reluctance to have her bet on me was really a tip to take Blott's end. She did. Funny thing is, she ain't sore at her cousin now. It's me!"

"The dumb dame!" I explodes. "What did you tell her?"

"I'm afraid I got sore myself, Harry. No use goin' into the rest of it. Except she called me a cheap pugilist and said she didn't care to ever see me again. She won't—no fear! What a sap I've been!" His face drops in his hands.

"Cheer up, kid!" I slaps him on the shoulder. "This is really a break for you, gettin' washed up with a doll like that. Taggin' us for crooks, huh? Why—"

My own telephone buzzed, cuttin' me short. I found McClary, matchmaker o' the Garden, on the wire.

"Can offer Glover a title shot with Champion Benny Lavine in three weeks, ten rounds," Mac informs me. "The boxing commission has shelved Blott for fouling your boy. Gorilla looked better than Gloyer last night, Harry; I wouldn't fool you. Still, Gib won the nod, and the fans are for him. Benny, mightn't have been willing to risk his crown, either, if your fighter had showed too strong. Bring Glover down to the office."

"This afternoon!" I promises, gleeful. Hangin' up, I spilled the news to Gib. He sort o' shook his head.

"I want to shake Mammothville, Harry. Suppose we ramble back to the Coast?"

"And pass up the chance at the title you've been ambitious to capture?" I cracks. "Be your age! Are you gonna curl up because this Snow baby put the chill on you? Forget that flossie! In three weeks you may be light-heavy-weight champion. Then you'll have your pick o' fat purses and slim pippins!"

"To heck with the pippins!" Gib growls. "At that, I guess you're right, Harry. I'd be a chump to lam off now."

Articles was signed for the scuffle. In a couple o' days I carted Gib back to the Jersey camp. I seen to it he trained hard and faithful. Nor was there any Delphine Snows around to distract his mind. Always a careful liver, he rounded out to the pink of condition. Just the same, I was secretly bothered as the week o' the fight dawned. The kid was in splendid shape, and yet—well, somethin' was lackin'. He didn't display the old, fierce drive.

WE didn't come into Mammothville until the day o' the big shot. In a championship bout there's generally a lotta angles to be watched, and I wasn't runnin' no risks. Benny Lavine was the odds-on choice. Considerable dough backed him, so it paid to be careful.

This Mammothville combat meant plenty to Glover and me. I'd planned accordingly, and didn't crave to have the apple wagon upset.

However, no tricky stuff was pulled on us. About ten o'clock that night I herded Gib Glover and a crew o' seconds toward the ring. A close to capacity throng filled the Garden. My

boy got a swell hand as he crawled through the hemp. Benny Lavine appeared a couple o' minutes later, amid a roar o' applause. The champ was pretty popular in the big town.

Benny was a clever boxer, rather than a kayo artist. I knew he boasted a educated left mitt and a sweet right cross. He didn't have the toughest chin in the game. Several opponents had floored him the past year, only to be outpointed by the crafty champ.

I sent Glover in to carry the battle to Lavine from the openin' gong. Startin' with a rush, he managed to crack the champ with a right-hander to the button in the first twenty seconds. The sock staggered Benny and made the bugs shout. Gib tried desperately to drop Lavine, throwin' both dukes at the jaw. The title holder threw up his guard, fended off my fighter's onslaught and toward the end o' the chapter was scorin' points with a jabbin' left.

The second semester was all Lavine's. Duckin' and blockin' Gib's thrusts to the head, he peppered the youngster with his flickin' left. It seemed to me Gib wasn't crowdin' him hard enough. He needed more fire in his attack. The fans' applause was fainter as he wheeled to the corner at the bell. The champion's supporters donated him a big hand.

"Lay off that chin a while, kid!" I says, bendin' over the stool. "Switch to the body. Bore in and left hook him hard. Get rough!"

Gib nodded. Yet he appeared to have forgotten my instructions in the third round. He continued to gun for the champ's well protected chin.

"Downstairs!" I yells, wavin' the towel clutched in my hand.

Gib heard. He stepped in with a solid right hand smash to the stomach

a good six inches above the waistline; at least.

Suddenly somebody in the crowd booed loudly. The Bronx cheer was took up by a dozen voices. I seen a scowl cross the face o' my fighter.

A instant later Lavine slipped to his knees on a wet spot in the canvas. He jumped up to his feet, extended his gloves in the usual attempt to shake paws after such a mishap. Gib cuffed 'em rudely aside, lunged in and ripped a mean left to the belly. He was booed again. This time far more than a dozen voices joined the condemnin' chorus. The gong pealed. Amid catcalls, Gib come to his stool. He glared at the razzers in the old familiar manner.

AS the battle progressed, the hoots and howls grew in volume. At the end o' the sixth round Gib Glover didn't seem to have a single friend left. He'd fought so fiercely that every move he made was booed. My fighter jeered back at his tormentors, which didn't lessen their vocal efforts.

Meanwhile, Gib's maulin' though always straight tactics and stiff body punchin' wasn't makin' the evenin' very pleasant for Benny Lavine. The title holder had the throng with him, but his noisy followers couldn't help him stave off a constant barrage o' punishin' blows.

A champion don't get to be a king-pin without havin' somethin', however. He's always dangerous. In the seventh round Gib Glover left himself open to a right cross. Benny let him have it full on the chin. Gib spilled on his spine. Scramblin' to his knees, he took a nine-count.

"Watch yourself!" I squawks.

Gib gained his feet. As Lavine tried to measure him for another right, he

flung forward. He clinched with the champ. And what a clinch! He threw his arms around Benny in a regular bear hug.

The champ and him went stumblin' across the ring, both finally floppin' in a heap. The bell rang before they was untangled.

"Hey, Glover! Why don't you take up wrestlin'?" shouts a peeved customer, to the accompaniment o' countless boos.

Gib showed his teeth in a vicious snarl.

The minute's intermission freshened my fighter. He bounced out for the eighth chapter and greeted Lavine with a wicked wallop in the cellar. He waded in, careful to keep his chin down, and pasted the champ's pantry at every opportunity. The round ended with Benny lookin' a trifle sick.

"He's weakenin'!" I exults in the corner. "Keep poundin' him. Don't let him stall through these last two stanzas!"

Lavine come out slow for the ninth. Havin' the edge of a knock-down, I knew all he desired was to stick six minutes more. So he devoted his skill to guardin' against Gib's left hook to the body.

It's quite a job, however, to cover your belly and your chin at the same time. With a minute left to go, Gib crowded Benny against the ropes. He shot a savage right to the point o' the chin. The blow caused the champ's knees to buckle. Gib feinted with the right a second time. Benny's guard raised.

My fighter picked his spot. That deadly left hook smashed home to the pit o' the stomach—an absolutely clean hit. The champion crumpled up, went down. While he lay squirmin', the referee begun to count. He refused to

heed the squawks o' "Low!" and "Foul!" from Lavine's corner and many ringsiders. He'd seen the sock was fair.

Benny was unable to arise before the fatal ten was tolled. The referee held up Gib Glover's hand—Gib Glover, the new king o' the light-heavies. Cheers commenced to drown out the boos, but there was still a few raspberries as we left the ring.

"**W**ELL, kid," I says, once we're in private, "you're champion o' the world! And a fine unpopular champ you'll be! Fans will pay plenty in the hope o' seein' you dethroned."

"Guess I must 've been a trifle rough." The youngster grins. "That booin' started me off in the third round. The moment the fans got on

me I begun to get hot. I didn't think o' nothin' but lickin' Lavine."

"Sure!" I agrees. "You was O. K. until the society frill put dumb notions into your bean. What you really need to spur you on is the cheers o' the crowd—provided they're Bronx cheers!"

"At that, Harry," he remarks, "I don't remember no reason for bein' booed in the third. I hadn't done a thing out o' the way."

"Oh," I says, real fast, "some birds has to boo just to exercise their lungs."

Not that I didn't know what caused them timely jeers. Hadn't I planted a dozen hired squawkers in the Garden at a couple o' bucks apiece for the sole purpose o' breakin' out in Bronx cheers when I waved the signal?

Some one has to use brains in this ring racket!

THE END.



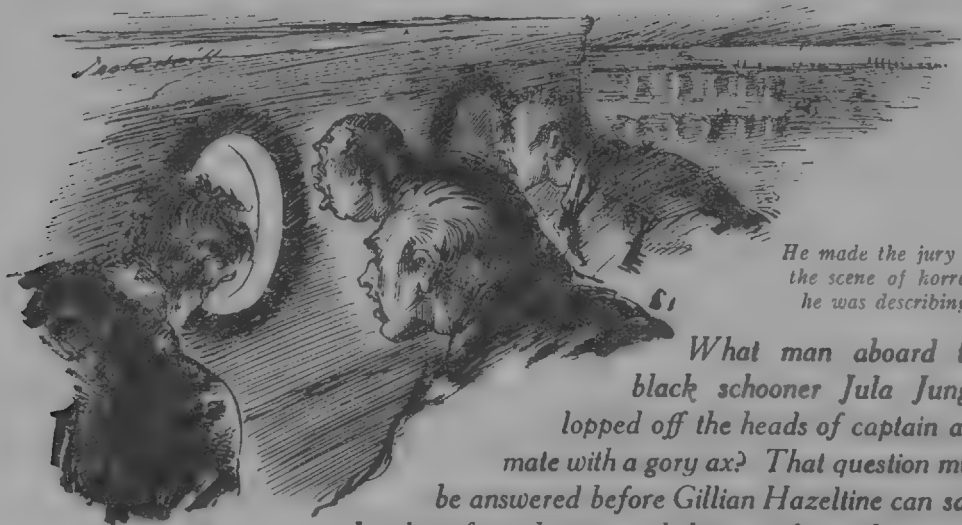
Superstitions About Jewels

THE ancients believed that certain gems influenced certain days of the week, bringing good or bad luck to the wearer according to the signs of the zodiac. Onyx was supposed to protect from poisonous serpents; a ruby insured against death by lightning; the agate when carved in the form of a salamander prevented and cured toothache; green malachite prevailed against poisoned food or drink; the sapphire cured madness, the amethyst drunkenness. Jasper was a very potent stone, not only as a guarantee of personal safety—especially in storms at sea—but when worn by a hunter it secured a big game-bag. Sardonyx smoothed the path of lovers and caused them to avoid misunderstandings.

A senator of Rome had such faith in his opal that he preferred exile to parting with it when it was coveted by the empress. In the Middle Ages powdered pearls were in high favor as a medicine. The topaz belonged to the sun, hence to wear it on Sunday brought good fortune, and it was a sacred stone to the sun worshipers of Yucatan. The diamond was Saturn's, and was worn on Saturday to win favor from that sinister planet.

Minna Irving.

Murder on the High Seas



*He made the jury see
the scene of horror
he was describing*

*What man aboard the
black schooner Julia Jungle
lopped off the heads of captain and
mate with a gory ax? That question must
be answered before Gillian Hazeltine can save
his client from the perjured charges of a cutthroat crew*

By GEORGE F. WORTS

Author of "Jungle Justice," "The Lost Punch," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

A BLACK schooner of mystery, handled by Carolina Dawn and her fiancé, Roger Pawling, sails into the harbor of the home town of the brilliant criminal lawyer Gillian Hazeltine who agrees to defend Pawling against the charges of the crew that they saw him kill Captain Dawn and First Mate Dirk Morton with an ax, after quarrels over his attentions to Carolina. Adelbert Yistle, Gillian's long-time enemy, is substituting for the Federal attorney in admiralty court.

The two men were killed in their staterooms at the rear of the after cabin, Morton's head and the ax being thrown overboard. The crew had chained Pawling up, but Carolina got the drop on them and locked them in the after cabin, freeing her sweetheart.

The crew are Second Mate Hans Larsen; Pete Wallaby, whining cockney steward; Ben Carney, the big black cook; and two deck hands, the gorilla-like Lester Slick, and the Frenchman, Pierre Lohac. Larssen and Wallaby each owned a quarter share of the ship, and wanted the captain to go into the copra trade.

Gillian tries to impeach the character of the crew, showing that Carney, Wallaby, and Slick had been implicated in previous murders. All five of them bear a curious tattoo-mark, a square dot within two circles, which had been the pirate insignia of an ancestor of Larssen.

A snobbish Boston lawyer, Haughton, comes to take charge of the defense, more to protect the Pawling rel-

This story began in the Argosy for November 29.

atives from Hazeltine's "sensationalism"—such as his hint that a ghost did the murders—than to save Roger, whom Haughton considers guilty. Over his and Yistle's protests, Gillian gets the trial staged on the after deck of the schooner itself.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DANGEROUS WITNESS.

THE big blond mate took the stand and was sworn. Very carefully Larssen answered Mr. Yistle's questions. Yes; he had been at the wheel, aft, at the hour of the murders—two o'clock in the morning. Yes; he had looked into the portholes at the rear of the after cabin, and, by the light of Pawling's candle, had seen Roger Pawling dispatch with the ax first the captain, then the big red-headed mate.

"Why," Mr. Yistle asked, "did you not run down into the cabin when you say Mr. Pawling murder the captain? Why did you not rush down there and overpower him? Why did you permit him to go into Mr. Morton's cabin and murder him? Kindly give the jury your own answers to these questions, Mr. Larssen."

The mild blue eyes of the second mate traveled to the jury.

"We were scared stiff, that's why. After what we had just seen—the way he chopped off the skipper's head—no man alive would have gone down there. He could have blown out that candle and killed any or all of us. The only firearms aboard were down in that cabin."

"When did you go down?"

"It must have been a couple of minutes after he chopped off Dirk Morton's head. We decided to rush him.

When we went down there he was in a daze. He was holding Miss Dawn in his arms and—"

"Wait a minute! Did you hear her say, 'Oh, Roger, why did you kill them?'"

"Yes, sir. I heard her say it several times."

"Did you see much blood on him?"

"Yes, sir; he was smeared all over with blood."

"Did he offer resistance when you tried to put him in irons?"

"Yes, sir. He knocked out two of the men and kicked me in the shins."

Mr. Yistle questioned Larssen at length, drawing from him a more detailed picture of the murders and of the arrest of Roger Pawling. Larssen made an excellent witness.

Gillian opened cross-examination by asking the big blond man to tell him something about the unusual influence which Dirk Morton was reputed to have exercised over Pete Wallaby.

"I was not aware of it," Larssen said firmly.

"Do you recall saying on one occasion to Miss Dawn that it struck you as strange that Wallaby would stand for such abuse from Dirk Morton, unless Morton had something pretty serious on Wallaby?"

"No, I don't."

"Didn't you once ask Dirk Morton why he was so abusive to Pete Wallaby?"

"I did not."

Gillian abandoned that line of questioning. He said:

"Mr. Larssen, when I questioned you on the morning when this boat put into port here, I asked you about the weather on the night, or morning, of the murder. You told me that there was no wind, that there was a flat calm."

"Yes, sir."

"It was hot and calm?"

"Yes, sir."

"It must have been very unseasonable weather."

"Yes, sir."

"This boat was not moving at all?"

"No, sir."

"The sails were hanging limp and motionless?"

"Yes, sir."

"When a sailing vessel is becalmed in such a way as you have described, and if there is no indication that a wind is apt to spring up, is it customary for a man to stay at the wheel?"

"It was on this ship, sir. Captain Dawn was very particular."

"But Captain Dawn was in bed and asleep, wasn't he?"

"That makes no difference. He was my superior officer and he had given me orders to stay at the wheel. I was at the wheel."

"You always obey orders without question?"

"I always do!"

"Have you never disobeyed an order that a superior officer has given you?"

"I always obey orders!"

"You aren't lying?"

Larssen glared at him. "You heard me. I always obey orders!"

"**W**HY were you discharged from the crew of the schooner *Azura* in Baltimore on January 5, 1913?" Hazeltine demanded. "Wasn't it because the captain—Captain Black—told you to take charge of the ship while he motored to Philadelphia, and then came back unexpectedly to find you had gone ashore on a spree?"

Larssen did not answer. Judge Barlow said: "The witness will answer."

"I had forgotten."

"Then you do," Gillian pressed his point, "occasionally disobey orders—when the captain isn't looking?"

"Say," Larssen snapped, "I can see through you like a piece of glass! If I say I wasn't at the wheel, you'll say I was down in the cabin with that ax!"

"That's where you were, wasn't it?"

"No!" Larssen roared.

"But you've admitted you weren't at the wheel!"

"I do not! I was at the wheel! I tell you, I was at the wheel!"

"In a dead flat calm, with the skipper asleep, and the barometer showing no indication of wind coming?"

"Yes, yes, yes! I was at the wheel!"

"You're going to stick to that story, are you?"

Mr. Yistle objected. He was sustained.

Gillian: "Mr. Larssen, isn't it true that you use cocaine?"

"What if I do?"

"In using cocaine, isn't it customary, using it as you do, to dissolve a cocaine tablet in warm water, fill the needle with this solution and inject the contents into a vein?"

"You seem to know as much about it as I do!"

"You use cocaine, do you not, when your spirits are low—when you have need of reckless courage?"

"Objection!" roared Mr. Yistle.

"Sustained!"

Gillian said rapidly: "Larssen, isn't it true that you left that wheel to fix yourself a shot of cocaine so you'd have enough nerve to go into that cabin and kill those two men?"

"No! No! I didn't kill them! I tell you, I was at the wheel and saw Pawling cut off those men's heads!"

"When did you take cocaine that night?"

"I don't remember."

Gillian said quickly: "After you took the cocaine, who were the ghosts that you saw?"

"I didn't see any ghosts!"

"Who cut the lifeboats from these after davits?"

"I don't know!"

"Let's go briefly over the events of the morning, following the murder. After breakfast, you ordered Ben Carney to sew up the dead men in canvas for burial. When they were properly sewed up, you read the burial services and put them overboard; then you had Slick, Lohac, Wallaby and Carney tattooed. Then what did you do?"

"I didn't have them tattooed. They had themselves tattooed. After that we sat down to eat lunch."

"What did you do after the tattooing and before lunch?"

"Nothing."

"Didn't you throw Mr. Pawling's door overboard?"

"No! He threw it over himself so he could get away with that fishy story about its panel having been smashed and having blood on it!"

"Did you see him?"

"Yes!"

"What do you know about that missing lifeboat?"

Larssen looked at him narrowly. Then he said harshly: "Nothing, mister; not a thing."

"When did you first notice that it had been cut from its falls and was towing astern by its painter?"

"I didn't pay any attention to it. I didn't see it. How could I? There wasn't any wind until an hour or two after we had been nailed up in the after cabin."

"You mean, you weren't on this deck at any time after the murder and the arrest of Mr. Pawling?"

"No."

"Of course; why should you be? There was a flat calm, didn't you say?"

"That's what I said."

"You didn't think it was necessary to be at the wheel or to put a man at the wheel?"

"No."

"Yet, at the time of the murders, it was calm, too, and you were at the wheel. How can you account for that?"

Larssen's eyes had narrowed to slits. His hands were clenched into fists on his knees. He licked his lips repeatedly and blurted:

"I was captain after the murders, wasn't I?"

"Yes!" Gillian said triumphantly. "You could do what you pleased then, couldn't you?"

"I had command of this ship, if that's what you mean."

"And you were also a fourth owner. With the captain out of your way—"

Mr. Yistle shouted an objection. He was sustained.

GILLIAN grimly proceeded, re-framing his question: "You were in command, and you had, at the captain's death, acquired the right because of your quarter ownership to dictate where she should go?"

"I did."

"And you decided to take her to Mexico. Why Mexico? Why not the nearest port?"

"Why not the port we were cleared for?" Larssen growled. "What difference did it make? We weren't inside territorial waters, were we? I could decide the best place to go, couldn't I?"

"Why were you going to Mexico?"

"Because I was going to put this

boat in the copra trade, as I'd been wanting to do."

"Not dope-running or rum-smuggling?"

"I said copra."

"Didn't you have a conversation in Havana, Cuba, about a year ago with a man named Leon Harmanos, who owns a rum distillery there?"

Larssen did not answer.

"Didn't you tell Leon Harmanos that you were planning to turn this boat into a rum-runner? Didn't you talk to him about shipments?"

Larssen spat out: "What if I did?"

"Then you were lying about the copra."

"I was not. I intended carrying copra."

"To hide the rum? Well, never mind. Let's go on. I suppose, Mr. Larssen, you have been reading the lengthy newspaper accounts of this case since this ship came into port here?"

"I have."

"Then you must have read of the statement given out by Mr. Arnold Blackwood to the effect that that tattoo mark on your forearm is an old secret symbol of your family, and was used by one of your ancestors, a Swedish pirate named Johannes Larssen, as a house flag."

"Sure. I read that."

"Do you deny that it is true?"

"I certainly do."

"Your honor," Gillian said, "I should like to read into the record the report that Mr. Arnold Blackwood, the cipher expert, has made on this tattoo mark that these men are wearing."

Mr. Yistle hotly objected, but was overruled. Gillian read the report and another report, this one from a genealogist, who had traced Hans Larssen's

pedigree directly back to the old pirate. The report concluded with the statement that Hans Larssen's great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather, Johannes Larssen, had been hanged in Maracaibo in the year 1708.

Then Gillian addressed the witness with this question:

"You deny, do you, that you were carefully organizing this crew to stand behind you on a rum-running or dope-running program or any other illegal sort of venture, call it piracy or what you will?"

"I do!"

"Then I ask you once again: Why did you have that old pirate's house flag tattooed on the bodies of these men?"

The Swede stared at Gillian malevolently. Gillian quickly turned to the jury.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you have been listening carefully to all of this evidence. You have heard me prove with reports from authorities that this man is a descendant of a pirate who was hanged; that he is wearing on his forearm the symbol of that old pirate; that he was planning to engage in rum-running, dope-smuggling, or some other illegal venture—perhaps piracy. Now I want you to hear his answer to my question: Why did he have that piratical emblem tattooed on these three men?"

"Objection!" yelled Mr. Yistle.

"Overruled."

"Because," Gillian said with a wide smile, "they thought it was pretty? Is that why they had it tattooed on themselves?"

"They liked the looks of it," Larssen shouted.

Mr. Yistle now moved that all of this testimony be stricken from the

record. His request was denied. He drew a deep breath and looked at Gillian. In that look was supreme confidence. Gillian might shake his witnesses on minor points, but he could not budge them an inch from their story of the murders.

CHAPTER XIV.

MORE SPECTERS FROM THE PAST.

GILLIAN resumed: "Mr. Larssen, were you ever convicted on a criminal charge? To be exact, did you serve five years in the French penal colony on Devil's Island—1915 to 1920—for beating to death a beggar who asked you for a few centimes on the water front at Marseilles?"

"I didn't know I was going to break his neck."

Mr. Yistle groaned.

"Ah," Gillian pounced, "so you didn't know you were going to break his neck! Did you care?"

Mr. Yistle: "Objection!"

"Sustained."

"Mr. Larssen," Gillian pursued, "will you kindly tell the jury just how you broke that beggar's neck?"

"It was an accident," the mate growled.

"You mean, he fell off the dock and broke his neck?"

"No," the witness muttered surlily.

"I—pushed him. He fell. He broke his neck. It was too bad."

"And you served five years on Devil's Island?"

"What if I did?"

"Very well. Let's not go into that. Let's go into another matter. Why did you leave Sweden eighteen years ago?"

"Because I wanted to go to sea."

"No other reasons?"

"No."

"Have you ever been in a town in Sweden, near Stockholm, named Norrkoping?"

The witness nodded curtly.

"Where did you spend the years 1911 and 1912?"

"I don't remember— In Sweden."

"Did you not spend those two years in a prison in Stockholm for seducing a fifteen year old girl in Norrkoping?"

The witness's mild blue eyes were dancing now with fury.

"I don't remember!" he snarled.

"You deny seducing the girl?"

"I don't remember!"

"And you don't remember organizing the crew of this schooner to go in for piracy?"

"No! I did not!"

Mr. Yistle wiped moisture from his forehead. The drizzle, which had stopped, had set in again. But the moisture on Mr. Yistle's brow was not entirely bestowed by heaven.

Gillian surrendered the witness to him. And Mr. Yistle tried desperately to restore Larssen to his former stature. But Larssen had lost his temper. Smarting under Gillian's lashing, he snapped at Mr. Yistle. He became a little confused. Mr. Yistle gave it up. Gillian leaped into the breach, in recross-examination, and reduced Larssen to a state of sputtering incoherency.

But the next witness, Pierre Lohac, turned the tide back again under Mr. Yistle's clever questioning.

PIERRE LOHAC told of having been waked up by Lester Slick, as they were lying on deck, shortly after four bells on the morning of the murders; told of seeing Roger Pawling sneak down the forward stairway of the after house with the ax in his

hand. With excited gestures, Lohac described the two murders just as Larssen and Slick had described them.

Then Gillian took the witness.

"Mr. Lohac, why did you have that mark tattooed on your body?"

"Because I liked it."

"You admired it?"

"Yes, sir."

"For artistic reasons?"

"Yes, sir."

"You liked it so much that you wanted it copied on your body so that you could admire it at your leisure. That's what you mean, isn't it?"

The Frenchman's eyes were flashing. He may have been thinking of more than one thing at a time. At all events, he fell into the trap.

"Yes, sir. So I could admire it."

Mr. Yistle groaned. Distinctly he said, "Oh, my God!"

And Gillian said rapidly: "Then why, in the name of heaven, did you have it tattooed on your shoulder blade?"

The Frenchman stared at him. He wet his lips. He made several expressive gestures with his hands. Then he grinned foolishly.

"You have me there," he admitted.

Mr. Yistle groaned again. Gillian having turned the tide once again on this insignificant pebble of a trick, hastened to say:

"Mr. Lohac, I suppose you have no criminal record. I suppose you have never been convicted of the crime of murder."

"No, sir. Never!"

"That distinguishes you from the other four members of this conspiracy, doesn't it?"

"Objection!"

"Sustained."

But Gillian plunged on. "Not being a murderer places you on a much

higher level than your shipmates, does it not?"

Judge Barlow said sharply: "Mr. Hazeltine, you must confine yourself to the taking of direct testimony. Your last two questions are inadmissible, as calling for a conclusion."

"I apologize," Gillian said. "We will go back. Mr. Lohac, I want to ask you again: Have you ever been convicted of a murder?"

"Objection!" shouted Mr. Yistle.

"Sustained! Mr. Hazeltine—"

"Your honor, I apologize." But Gillian did not look contrite. He said:

"I will reframe the question: Mr. Lohac, have you ever been sentenced on a criminal charge?"

The Frenchman looked pale and worried. He hesitated so long that Gillian helped him.

"Perhaps your memory is bad, too. Did you not serve two years in the Atlanta penitentiary, beginning in 1922, for your participation in smuggling cocaine, heroin and morphine into Louisiana from Cuba?"

"I was framed!"

"But did you serve those two years?"

"No! My time was shortened for good behavior!"

"You're excused."

Several of the jurymen laughed. Even Judge Barlow smiled. Then he said:

"Mr. Yistle, how many more witnesses have you?"

"Only one, your honor—Ben Carney. And I wish to recall Peter Walaby afterward."

Judge Barlow looked at his watch. He said: "I think we'll have time to hear one of them before we recess for luncheon."

"I would suggest, your honor," Gillian said, "that we adjourn to the din-

ing saloon for the remainder of this session. This drizzle of rain is growing worse."

This suggestion was acted upon. Judges, jury, stenographers, witnesses and lawyers descended to the Julia Jungle's spacious dining saloon. Chairs and benches were brought down. Lamps were lighted. Reporters huddled in doorways. A chair in a corner was selected as the witness stand.

Mr. Yistle announced his next witness: "Benjamin Carney—recall!"

CHAPTER XV.

A FIGHTING CHANCE.

GILLIAN eyed the big Negro uneasily as he went to the stand.

Ben Carney had a quick imagination. His story somehow remained the most credible of any that had been told. His testimony now, as an actual eye-witness, might well be very damaging. But Gillian had other facts of Carney's criminal past with which to combat this.

Mr. Yistle began the examination by asking Carney where he had been at about four bells, or two o'clock, on the morning of April 12.

The Negro rolled his eyes until the white showed. His teeth flashed white-ly in the dark room.

"Ah was standin' on de after deck wid Misto' Lahssen. It was too hot fo' sleep; so Ah had come up and walked aft fo' a breath ob air. De mate and Ah was standing there talkin' 'bout Misto' Pawling and de ol' man, and how dey was always wranglin' 'bout Miss Carolina, when Misto' Slick an' Frenchy come hot-footin' it around from de stabbard side an' said dey had jes' saw Misto' Pawling go sneakin' down de for'ard stairway wid

an ax—de ax Ah done tol' you he was whettin' dat mawnin'. Yassuh."

"Did you see Mr. Pawling go into the two cabins and chop off the heads of the two men?" Mr. Yistle encouraged.

"Yassuh. Sho' did. Ah seed dat boy go into de cap'm's room, and den into de mate's room, wid a candle in one hand and de ax in de other. Ah seed him lop off dey heads—jes' lak dat. *Wham! Wham!* Boss, Ah means to say Ah was one scairt black boy. Yassuh! It sho' turned mah blood into ribbons ob ice."

"Did you see Mr. Pawling pick up Dirk Morton's head from the floor, after severing it from his body, and stare at it?"

"Yassuh. Ah seed dat, too."

"You saw him carry it out of the room?"

"Yassuh. Sho' did."

"After you had recovered from the shock of that horrible sight, were you one of the men who rushed into this room and seized Mr. Pawling?"

"Yassuh—Ah was de last one down! We done seized him right ober by dat do'."

"Did you see any blood on the defendant?"

"Boss, ask me where Ah didn't see no blood! Go on and ask me! Wherever Ah looked, dat's all Ah saw. Blood on everything. Blood on his hands. Blood on his face. Blood all ober de flo'. Nebber did see such a mess. No, suh."

Gillian took the witness. Unwrapping a paper parcel, he brought to light a pair of large rubber gloves and a yellow oilskin coat.

"Ben, do you recognize these articles of clothing?"

"Ah sho' do! Dey's mine!"

"Where'd you get them?"

"I bought the oilskin. A ship doctor made me a gift ob dem gloves."

"Where were they on the night of the murders?"

"In de fo'c's'le—under mah bunk. Yassuh!"

Gillian put the objects down and walked toward the Negro.

"Ben, do you deny that you ever discussed with Mr. Larssen, Pierre Lohac, Lester Slick and Peter Wallaby a proposition of Mr. Larssen's to turn this schooner into a rum boat—or a pirate ship?"

"Yassuh, sho' Ah do. Ah mean, no, suh, Ah nebber did!"

"You mean," Gillian promptly took him up, "they wouldn't let you into the conspiracy, because you're a black man?"

"No, suh, Ah don't. Mah color didn't make no difference. Dey—" He stopped, seeming to choke.

"They let you into the conspiracy, did they, to send Mr. Pawling to the gallows and turn pirates?"

"No, suh," the Negro shouted. "No sech a thing. Wasn't no 'spiracy. Ah done tol' you dey wasn't no 'spiracy!"

"Ben," said Gillian, "that sentence you served in Florida for slashing that washwoman wasn't the only time you ever served, was it?"

In the dimness, the Negro's eyes seemed to gleam.

"Ah don't know whut you mean, boss," he said uneasily.

"I SEEM," Gillian said, "to be spending most of my time refreshing your and your shipmates' memories. Didn't you get into a knife fight with a white man named Judson Herrick, in San Francisco, on the afternoon of July 4, 1911?"

"Did Ah?"

"Didn't you? Didn't you stab that man seven times in the chest? Didn't you serve ten months for that?"

"Boss," said the cook earnestly, "lemme explain. Ah did cahve mah 'nitals on dat white man, jes' lak you say. 'Cause why? 'Cause he run in a pair ob loaded dice on me in a crap game. Yassuh! He had it comin'!"

"In other words, whenever you get angry at a man—or a woman—you pull out a razor or a knife, or you pick up an ax—"

"Nebber picked up no ax to hit a man wid!" the Negro shouted.

"How do we know?"

"Ah'm tellin' you. Dat's why!"

"All right! Whenever you get mad, you use some sharp-edged cutting instrument—"

"'Tain't so! Ah cahved dat black wench, an' I cahved dat crooked gambler. Dassall—ain't it?"

Gillian waved his hand. Mr. Yistle sprang up and attempted to undo the damage Gillian had done. But Ben Carney was resentful. He was rattled and not a little scared. There was dark magic in the way Gillian had resurrected those old affairs of Ben's, and Ben was wary. He was, in fact, overcautious. Mr. Yistle's reexamination was distinctly a failure. The Negro practically refused to talk.

Gillian wished that it was possible to avoid the coöperation Mr. Haughton was so anxious to give. Those Boston society folk with their supercilious airs would antagonize the jury of honest workingmen. He wished it were possible to take up immediately a discussion of the evidence now in.

He had, he believed, an even chance to bring in an acquittal verdict for Roger as things stood now. He was sure he had implanted in the jury's mind a suspicion, which he might fan

into a certainty, that the five men had conspired to send Roger to the galleys.

Mr. Yistle was worried. He looked worried. There were creases between his eyes and he was repeatedly running his fingers through his hair—a sure sign.

Judge Barlow said: "Mr. Yistle, have you any more witnesses?"

And Mr. Yistle said: "I want to recall Pete Wallaby, your honor. He is the last."

"Will this examination take long?"

"No, your honor. No longer than ten minutes."

"Very well. We will take recess immediately afterward. Take the stand, Mr. Wallaby."

The cockney went to the chair in the corner and seated himself.

MR. YISTLE: "Mr. Wallaby, at four bells, or two o'clock on the morning of April 12, where, to the best of your recollection, were you?"

"Asleep in the fo'c's'le, sir."

"At what time were you awakened?"

"It must 'ave been just a few minutes after two, sir."

"What awakened you?"

"I 'eard some shouts, sir, or at least I fancied I did. I woke up and I went to the fo'c's'le doorway and listened. I remember that it was a blistering 'ot night, sir. I 'eard men yelling and I ran toward them. My first thought was that the ship was on fire."

"When I reached the after 'ouse, I 'eard the yelling down below in this room. I came down the for'ard stairway, and everywhere I looked I saw blood. Mr. Morton was lying dead, with 'is 'ead missing, in 'is cabin; and Captain Dawn, with 'is 'ead off, was ly-

ing dead in his cabin. I was absolutely 'orrified, sir. Mr. Pawling was struggling and fighting with Mr. Larssen, Mr. Carney, Mr. Lohac and Mr. Slick. Some one said Mr. Pawling 'ad just murdered the captain and the myte. Mr. Pawling was putting up a terrific fight, but finally 'e was subdued and put in irons."

"During this fight, did he strike you?"

"Yes, sir. 'E landed a powerful blow on my forehead right 'ere, sir. It fair knocked the daylight out of me, sir."

"Did he knock you unconscious?"

"Yes, sir; I fancy 'e did. And at the same time, I believe 'e knocked Mr. Lohac unconscious."

"Did you see blood on Mr. Pawling?"

"Yes, sir. 'Is 'ands were bloody and 'is face was bloody. And there was blood all down the front of 'is pyjamas and bathrobe."

"Do you know what became of these pyjamas and bathrobe?"

"Yes, sir; they were thrown overboard that syne day."

"By whom?"

"By myself, sir."

Mr. Yistle asked a few more questions pertaining to the scene in the dining saloon when Wallaby entered it that fateful night, then dismissed him. He said curtly:

"The United States rests."

Judge Barlow asked Gillian if he intended to cross-examine the witness on his recent testimony.

"Yes, your honor."

"It had better go over until this afternoon. Gentlemen of the jury, we are about to take a recess until two thirty o'clock this afternoon. The Court admonishes you not to speak about this case among yourselves or

permit any one to speak to you about it. You will keep your minds open until the case is finally submitted to you.

"Bailiff, if you will have the police launch come alongside, we will go ashore. You will take charge of the prisoner now, and the other bailiff will accompany the jury to the nearest restaurant. I believe there is a good restaurant located near by on Water Street."

The few newspaper men who remained filed out. Since they had come aboard, their number had thinned considerably. In ones and twos they had been hastening ashore, to file their running stories.

CAROLINA waited until no one remained but Gillian and herself. "Gillian," she said, "how do things stand?"

The lawyer shrugged. "If Yistle and I could start arguing the case immediately after recess, there might be a fighting chance. I am worried about Haughton. He will befog the issue. If I only had a clean deck, I might succeed in convincing the jury what liars these five witnesses are. But I'll frankly admit that, as things stand, the odds are against us."

"But, Gillian, with what you brought out about that tattoo mark, you've proved there was a conspiracy! And what about these amazing disclosures you've been hinting at? Aren't you convinced it's Larssen?"

"I've run into blind alleys," Gillian said wearily.

"But even if you get Roger off with clever arguments, there'll still be a horrible cloud over him. You've got to find the guilty man!"

"If I can get him off at all, I'll be satisfied. Run along now, Carolina.

I've got some terrific concentrating to do."

She looked at him for some hope, but there was none to be found in his face.

When she was gone, Gillian sat down at the table, opened a leather dispatch case and removed from it a thick pile of documents. These represented only a small part of the data he had been securing through agents from various corners of the world. Much of this data was worthless, but he had industriously and tirelessly sifted through it all.

Drawing a pad of paper before him and uncapping his fountain pen, Gillian compiled a list of the clues which had led him eventually into a blind alley.

The list he had compiled was as follows:

1. Had the rubber gloves and yellow slicker been worn by the murderer and washed in the sea afterward?

2. How otherwise was it possible for the five suspects to appear in the dining saloon within five minutes of the time the murders were committed without blood being seen on any of them?

3. Why were the head and ax thrown overboard?

4. Where was Larssen when the murders were committed? (Gillian had interviewed some twenty-odd sailing men on the question of whether or not a man would be at the helm during a flat calm which had persisted for hours and showed no sign of ending. Their almost unanimous answer had been that the helm would have been deserted.)

5. Why do Larssen and Wallaby turn pale when ghosts are mentioned?

6. Who removed the door from Roger's room and threw it overboard?

7. Who cut the lifeboat falls and tied the boat to the stern rail by the painter?

8. Wallaby and Dirk Morton sailed together for fifteen years in this ship.

g. Dirk Morton exerted some powerful influence over Wallaby. What was behind that influence?

GILLIAN pushed the pad aside and opened a bound record of the Jula Jungle's career. The old schooner had engaged in almost every known trade, from pearling to filibustering. Gillian made a note of the filibustering, and picked up the several bound volumes of typed sheets which represented the detailed reports of several operatives on the activities of the schooner's crew.

All of these reports were fundamentally the same as the first that had reached his desk. Except for a few mildly drunken shore parties, the five men had conducted themselves beyond reproach. Perhaps they were too conscious of being shadowed. They had done considerable painting and calking on the schooner.

Generally, they spent their evenings shooting pool or at a movie. Dan Murphy had seen to it that plenty of girls were thrown in their way; but the only piece of information of real value that the girls had secured had been that which pertained to the tattooing.

Lester Slick, the human gorilla, had said nothing more of importance to the Delaney girl. The five men had, for the most part, lived simply and quietly aboard the boat.

Gillian smoked and pondered these simple, straight, innocent facts—and got nowhere.

Filibustering! The word tapped at Gillian's imagination. Filibustering! Eleven years ago, so the record ran, the Jula Jungle had successfully run a number of machine guns through the United States blockade into Nicaragua. One night a destroyer had stopped the Jula Jungle, but her captain had some-

how bluffed his way through and landed the machine guns.

Gillian sat back in the chair and smoked and scowled. Suddenly his mouth opened and the cigar slid out of it and fell. He jumped up and ran up the forward stairs and into the rain.

His subsequent actions were comparable to those of a man suddenly bereft of reason. He opened hatch covers and scrambled down into cargo holds. He returned to the deck and raced forward to the fo'c's'le, only to turn about again and start madly aft. When he was amidships, he saw the police launch putting out from the dock. He would not have time to give full play to his inspiration. But wait till he had Wallaby on the stand!

Gillian went into the bathroom and washed the cobwebs and grime from his face and hands. He went out on deck and paced up and down with a long blue plume of fragrant cigar smoke trailing him while the two judges, the jury, the prisoner and the witnesses came aboard and went below. He called to Carolina, but she did not hear him. As she disappeared into the cabin, he started aft.

Gillian threw his cigar overboard and went down the stairs with the light of battle in his eyes.

"Filibustering." A word packed with adventurous possibilities!

CHAPTER XVI.

STARTLING EVIDENCE.

JUDGE BARLOW, declaring court open, requested Peter Wallaby to take the stand. Gillian watched the cockney as he walked to the chair as a cat might watch a rat on which it will presently pounce.

"Mr. Wallaby," he began, "I want

to go over once more some of your testimony. How long have you been steward of this schooner?"

"For fifteen years, sir," said Wallaby, showing his little sharp vampire teeth.

"All of that period, until the night of April 12, you served with Dirk Morton, did you not?"

"Yes, sir; all of it."

"Will you kindly tell the jury in what business this schooner was engaged during the summer of 1919?"

"Eleven years ago, sir? Let me think. In the summer of 1919, she was engaged in carrying lumber, I believe, from Charleston to Nova Scotia—'Alifax, to be exact, sir."

"Let me refresh your memory, Mr. Wallaby. Wasn't it the summer of 1920 that she was in the lumber trade? On the previous summer, wasn't she engaged in filibustering—carrying machine guns and ammunition into Nicaragua?"

The witness wet his lips. He shot a glance at Mr. Yistle. But Mr. Yistle could give him no help.

Wallaby nodded. "Yes, sir; I believe she was, sir."

"Did she not, on the night of August twenty-fourth, successfully land in Nicaragua, on a beach near the town of Prinzipolca, about a hundred machine guns and ten thousand rounds of ammunition?"

Again Wallaby glanced in distress at Mr. Yistle. And Mr. Yistle acted.

"I object, your honor. I cannot see how incidents which may or may not have taken place eleven years ago have any bearing on the guilt or innocence of the man charged with these murders."

"What I have in mind, if the court please," Gillian replied, "has a direct bearing on the murderer."

"You may proceed, Mr. Hazeltine."

"On this August night, eleven years ago," Gillian resumed, "was not this schooner overhauled by a United States destroyer?"

Even in the dim light of the room, the cockney's pallor was noticeable. His eyes began to glitter with fright.

"Yes, sir," he mumbled.

"Did officers from the destroyer come aboard this schooner?"

"Yes, sir. They came aboard to see our papers, sir."

"And when they saw your papers, didn't they search this ship for machine guns and ammunition?"

Wallaby started to shake his head. His color was now almost green. He stammered: "Y-yes, sir!"

"Did they find any?" Gillian shot at him.

"N-no, sir! You see—"

"Why didn't they find them?"

"They only looked 'astily, sir!"

"And when the destroyer officers went back to their own ship, this schooner proceeded to shore, did it not, and landed those machine guns and ten thousand rounds of ammunition on the beach near Prinzipolca?"

"Ye-yes, sir!"

"**W**HERE," Gillian roared, "were those machine guns hidden?"

The cockney cowered back. He licked his lips. He rubbed his hands together. He fluttered them in futility.

"I—I don't know, sir!"

"You were on board this ship, were you not, when those machine guns were loaded?"

"Yes, sir!"

"You were on board this ship, were you not, when they were unloaded?"

"Y-yes, sir!"—a hoarse whisper.

"Where were they hidden?"

"I tell you," the cockney cried, almost squealing, "I don't know. I never knew. I never asked."

"They were so well hidden that the naval officers did not find them. Weren't they? Answer me!"

"Ye-yes, sir."

"Where were they hidden?"

"I tell you, I don't know!"

Gillian turned to the jury. "Gentlemen," he said, "it has been obvious to you throughout this trial that I do not subscribe to the proposition stated at the outset by the United States acting district attorney. In short, I have been convinced that the accused is not guilty of the murder of Captain Dawn and Dirk Morton. Before going on with the present witness, I must ask your tolerance while I give you my picture of what happened aboard this schooner on the fateful morning of April twelfth."

Mr. Yistle said promptly: "Objected to as summation."

Gillian said: "I beg to submit that it is not summation. It takes the form of a detailed question which is being put to this witness. Will the court give a ruling on this point?"

After a brief discussion, Gillian was instructed to proceed.

"In considering the murders which took place on this schooner," he went on, "and in the course of my investigations, I came upon a number of puzzling and enlightening clues or signposts which pointed the way, in my mind, to the solution to this problem. The problem is, simply: Who killed the two men?"

"As they arranged themselves in my mind, there were about a dozen points to be considered and analyzed. They were:

"What was, or is, the significance of the tattooed mark on the bodies of

these men? Why had it been placed there, at Larssen's instigation, shortly following the murders?"

"Had the rubber gloves and yellow slicker found by a policeman under Ben Carney's bunk been worn by the murderer and washed in the sea afterward?"

"How otherwise was it possible for the five men in the crew—bearing in mind my contention that Roger Pawling is innocent and that one of them had an easy opportunity to commit the murders—manage to appear in the dining saloon within five minutes after the murders were committed without blood being seen on any of them?"

"Why were the head and the ax thrown overboard?"

"Where was Larssen when the murders were committed?"

"Where were the other members of the crew?"

"Was there a stowaway aboard?"

"Why do Larssen and Wallaby turn pale when ghosts are mentioned?"

"Who removed the door from Roger Pawling's room and threw it overboard? Why was this done?"

"Who cut the lifeboat falls and tied the boat to the stern rail by its painter?"

"What value to us is the fact that Wallaby and Dirk Morton sailed together in this ship for fifteen years?"

"What was behind the powerful influence that Dirk Morton is known to have exerted over Wallaby?"

Gillian paused. There was no sound in the cabin but the steady drumming of rain on the roof.

"LET me take up these points separately," the lawyer continued.

"Let me give you my answers, in order that I can compound a single, vitally important question to ask this witness.

"Was Larssen at the wheel before or after those murders took place, or while they were taking place? He certainly was not!

"Had the gloves and slicker been worn by the murderer? They had not. They were under Ben Carney's bunk at the time.

"Why do Larssen and Wallaby turn pale when ghosts are mentioned? Because they know that I have guessed the truth. I will return to this point again in a moment.

"Why and when was Roger Pawling's door thrown overboard? Because it was battered in and covered with blood and proved that he did not commit the murders. It was thrown overboard next morning. By whom? That is not important. Probably Wallaby."

Wallaby was staring at him with terror and fascination.

Gillian went grimly on: "Who cut the lifeboat from the falls and tied it to the stern rail? Wallaby! When? Within an hour after the murder! Why? To permit the murderer to escape!

"Was there a stowaway aboard? There was!"

"Wait a minute," Mr. Yistle expostulated. "Are you trying to tell us that a stowaway committed these murders and made his get-away?"

"Nothing of the kind," Gillian answered. "I will discuss that stowaway in a moment. Let us consider the tattoo marks. Why did Larssen have them put there? I will admit that the tattoo mark was my first real clew, because it meant conspiracy. By whom? Why, Larssen, of course! Why should Larssen organize this conspiracy? To make absolutely sure that the murders would not be fastened upon him! He was going to put this boat into the rum

trade or the dope trade or the hijacking racket—all so close to piracy that it was easy for him to persuade these adventurous cutthroats that they could profitably organize under his banner! United, they were a pirate band and would reap riches in southern waters with this schooner disguised as a copra boat! United, and if they cooked up a plausible story, Roger Pawling instead of one of them would be hanged for the murders!"

Mr. Yistle barked: "What you're doing is accusing Larssen of committing the murders!"

"Let's put it this way," Gillian said. "Let's say that Larssen went to all these pains so that suspicion, even if placed upon him, would be cast off by the clever story he and his shipmates concocted with Roger Pawling as the victim!"

Gillian mopped his forehead with a snowy handkerchief. He stuffed the handkerchief into a side pocket of his coat, took a deep breath and faced the jury again.

"Gentlemen, I am not summing up this case. In a moment I am going to ask this witness if what I say is not true—every detail of it. But there are other questions: What possible connection is there between these murders and the successful attempt of this schooner to smuggle machine guns and ammunition into Nicaragua eleven years ago? Where was Larssen when the murders were committed? Where were his shipmates? How was it possible for the five men, any of whom might have committed the murders, to appear in this room without a spot of blood on any of them so soon afterwards?

"I'll answer those questions briefly. Larssen's shipmates were taking cocaine. It makes no difference where

he was or what he was doing. He was not at the wheel! It was possible for the five men to appear in the cabin shortly after the murders because none of them is the murderer!"

Mr. Yistle sank back with a relieved and contemptuous smile.

GILLIAN went on, in a tense voice: "Let's follow Larssen! He leaves the paint locker—or wherever he went—and returns to the after deck. Through the portholes he sees Roger Pawling with Miss Dawn unconscious on his arm. Roger Pawling is holding a match in his free hand. By the light of that match, Larssen sees that the captain and Dirk Morton have had their heads chopped off! He rushes to the fo'c's'le and wakens the crew. None of them knows who committed the murders. What they do know is that, with their criminal records, suspicion must not be fastened on any of them. Hence, the conspiracy; hence the general tattooing the next morning, symbolizing it!"

Mr. Yistle said impatiently: "But who do you claim committed the murders?"

"Wallaby," Gillian said; "you can answer that. And you can tell us why, for fifteen years, you were Dirk Morton's slave! And you can tell us where that secret hiding-place is! Will you tell us?"

The cockney stared at Gillian with glazed eyes. His color was green. His lips were like ashes.

Gillian smashed his fist into the palm of his hand. "Where," he roared, "is he hiding?"

Mr. Yistle angrily broke in: "If the court please, this witness is being bulldozed. I respectfully submit that Mr. Hazeltine is endeavoring deliberately and with his familiar melodramatic

methods to befog the issue, to confuse the jury. With his array of startling facts, what has he proved? Missing lifeboats! Tattoo marks! Criminal records! Stowaways! Doors thrown overboard! Filibustering! Secret hiding-places!

"Hiding! Where is who hiding? This schooner has been under guard from the moment she dropped anchor in this stream. It is inconceivable that any man hiding on her could escape detection over all these weeks. Let's get down to brass tacks. Let's discuss a few of these startling facts. Let's discuss that missing lifeboat."

"Very well," Gillian agreed. He turned to the witness. "Wallaby, did you not cut down that lifeboat so that the murderer could escape? And did not Miss Dawn's unexpected arrest of you and your shipmates prevent you from helping the murderer escape?"

Wallaby stared at him stupidly.

Gillian roared: "Answer my questions! Isn't it true that *Dirk Morton is still alive*? Isn't it true that, on the morning of the murders, he somehow got in touch with you and enlisted your help? Isn't it true that you had to help, because he has something on you? Isn't it true that you are the only man in the crew who knows that Morton committed those murders? Isn't it true that Morton is still hiding on this boat?"

Mr. Yistle stared at Gillian, then burst into harsh laughter.

A startling crash occurred in the small room behind Mr. Yistle. It was Dirk Morton's old room—the room that Wallaby had been occupying since the murders. The dirty old carpet had been violently pushed up and aside, revealing a square hole in the floor from which a trap door had been thrown back. A man was climbing out—

of that hole—a gaunt, red-headed man in rags, with shocking eyes staring from cavernous sockets.

Mr. Yistle stared, gasped, and backed away from the doorway in such haste that he all but fell over a chair.

Dirk Morton plunged through the doorway!

BEFORE any one could prevent him, the man whose headless corpse was supposed to be on the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean dashed toward the forward stairway. A bailiff tried to reach him and failed.

Dirk Morton rushed up the stairway with a bailiff at his heels. A police whistle blew.

Gillian was halfway up the stairs in pursuit when Dirk Morton, with a policeman firmly grasping either arm, was brought back into the cabin. Handcuffs were snapped on his wrists.

Panting, he glared at Gillian.

"I'll get you," he said.

Gillian grinned. "Morton, they always say that. Where you're going, you won't get anything but flowers, and I doubt if you'll get those. Who was the man who stowed away in New York, down in that secret hold, and came up that night and tried to murder you?"

Dirk Morton sneered: "Try and find out!"

"Wasn't his name Jake Harper, the same Jake Harper who sailed as second mate on this schooner eleven years ago when she was filibustering?"

"What if it was?"

"Didn't you run off to Atlantic City with Jake Harper's wife one week-end last winter, when this schooner was in dry dock—and didn't Jake Harper say he'd kill you if he had to follow you all over the world?"

Dirk Morton stared at him and made no answer. Gillian went on:

"Wasn't it Jake Harper who came out of that hole at about two o'clock on the morning of April twelfth?"

"What if it was?" the red-haired man snarled.

"The point that puzzles me," Gillian said, "is, who ran and got the ax? Did he slip out and get the ax while you slept? Or did you get it? Never mind. It isn't important. After your fight with him, in which you chopped off his head—very unfortunately for you, Captain Dawn saw you. Isn't that so? You had to kill him, didn't you, to be rid of witnesses? Then you stripped Jake Harper, laid his body on your bunk and threw his head and clothes and the ax overboard, before going back to hide.

"You got away with it because no one saw you. And then, somehow, you got in touch with Wallaby, but before Wallaby could help you escape in the lifeboat, Miss Dawn had nailed him in this cabin with the rest of the crew. And you couldn't get away all the time you've been in port, because of the police guard. What I want to know is: What have you got on Wallaby?"

"I'll never squeal on Wallaby!" the red-haired giant spat out.

GILLIAN faced the judges. "If this court please, I wish to lodge a formal charge of murder against this man. And I wish to lodge a charge of perjury and conspiracy against Hans Larssen, Pierre Lohac, Ben Carney, and Lester Slick. The charge against Wallaby will be more serious: perjury, conspiracy, and aiding and abetting a criminal to escape justice."

It was impossible for Gillian to

make himself heard above the rising roar of voices. Every one was talking at once. Over tossing heads, Gillian saw Roger hugging Carolina. His attention was then distracted by Mr. Haughton.

The Boston lawyer was pale, perspiring and puffing.

"I knew you had something like this up your sleeve, Hazeltine!" he panted. "I knew it from the very beginning! Humiliating me! Humiliating my witnesses! You were perfectly aware that this would make me the laughing-stock of Boston—a brutal and heartless jest that I will never live down!"

Gillian looked at him coldly and in-

quiringly. "I'm afraid," he said, "I don't quite follow you, Mr. Haughton."

"You knew all along," Mr. Haughton angrily declared, "that that man was hiding down there! You held it out as a last-minute surprise—a bid for notoriety! As if you needed notoriety! As if you aren't sufficiently notorious already, with the sensational methods you always employ!"

Gillian looked at him for a long time before he answered that charge. Then he didn't answer it. All he said was:

"It's queer, but the only people who really do approve of my methods are the ones I manage to save from the gallows or the electric chair."

THE END.



The City of Snakes

THE city of snakes is on Butanan and is supported by the State of São Paulo, Brazil. The city is given over to the manufacture of serums to counteract the bite of venomous snakes which infest the State.

The snakes are kept in a miniature city of their own. There are houses divided by concrete walks with patches of grass between, the whole built around a lake of fresh flowing water and surrounded by walls of iron and concrete. The houses, or domes, are about twenty inches high and are divided into cells, each cell having a private entrance. During the day the snakes bask themselves on the concrete domes or on the walks, always returning to the same compartment to sleep. If a snake's privacy is invaded by another snake, he will fight to drive the intruder away. Nonpoisonous snakes have a community of their own, a jungle-like spot much like their native home. Here the snakes' habits are watched by attendants. Nonpoisonous snakes lay eggs to produce the young, while the poisonous variety bring forth their young alive.

The venom is carefully extracted from the snakes by scientists. After it is crystallized it is injected into horses in very small quantities. As serum is needed, the horses are bled, and the blood injected into the stricken person. These horses thrive on the poison, and if it is withheld for several days they become ill. A horse that has been treated with the venom for several months holds enough poison to kill a thousand horses instantly. Their blood saves many lives in São Paulo.

Addie Gates.

The Men Who Make The Argosy

HAROLD BRADLEY SAY

Author of "Dessert," "A Question of Ammunition," etc.

AS a youngster I remember reading stories by certain authors. From their writings I formed rather glamorously colored pictures of these persons whose stories took one along with a gang of hard riding cavalymen, up into the North woods where the snow was twenty feet deep and the wolves fairly snapping at the muzzle of one's rifle, slamming through seas running mountains high and thundering down on a ship where a skipper conquered the elements, to say nothing of his mutineers. Then from time to time I read something concerning these authors who made a winter's night worth while, and was often a little disappointed upon discovering that most of them were just common men. So I supply this article somewhat reluctantly.

But to get down to business: thirty-four years old, born in the then little town of Santa Paula in the center of a lot of California's oil fields, raised on an Oregon ranch, went to the University of Oregon, where I spent part of my time working on a Eugene newspaper, started spending summers in the forest service up in the Cascade mountains to earn money for more school, enlisted in the army April 5, 1917, married December of that year and left for France with the 65th Artillery five weeks later.

The latter fact accounts for me turning to war stories in 1926 when folk suddenly evinced a desire to have the war turned into fiction. I started selling stories—sea yarns—in 1924.

After the war I joined the staff of the *Portland Telegram*, and for seven years was its marine editor. I met a lot of ship people and heard a lot of ship stories. From British masters particularly who served in many strange places and on weird missions, I obtained the idea germs for many of my sea yarns.

In fact, "A Question of Ammunition" is based around one of these real-characters. The captain

in question, whom I shall call Smythe-Brooks, was one of the "red ticket" masters, a Britisher temporarily in command of an American flag vessel.

He had two Pelham Bay overnight officers and one experienced merchant officer aboard with him to run the ship, and the story of the voyage would have a laugh for every knot. Smythe-Brooks was a stumpy, little red-whiskered person

who wore a derby hat ashore, and at sea the countenance and manner of a man on whom all the world imposed. He had an American naval gun crew—assigned at the last moment. It was when the vessel was far at sea that the American naval lieutenant became much exercised when he found that the shells supplied him were oversize for the gun. The rings were too big.

"I say, can't you file 'em down?" asked Smythe-Brooks quite matter-of-factly and entirely unconcerned by the discovery.

It was from that remark that I built up "A Question of Ammunition."

Incidentally, Smythe-Brooks's ship reached Bordeaux, where the skipper

packed his bag and left the ship in a hurricane of disgust.

But I'm running away with space now. Will sign off with a couple more facts concerning myself. Still married and have two daughters, one just turning twelve, and the other nine. Don't play golf, but do a lot of fishing, and will be glad to tell any ARGOSY reader where to find some big ones. Of course, it's up to you to catch them.

For the past year I have been handling news publicity for the Portland Chamber of Commerce. For vacations I generally take a short sea trip on the Pacific.

My idea of a writer's paradise is to be aboard a freighter with a lot of old clothes and a typewriter just going anywhere.





Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint



BACK NUMBERS

THE market is open again! Here are some more buyers and sellers of back numbers:

Elgin, Iowa.

Here comes another ARGOSY fan. I have taken the ARGOSY for so long I can't remember the number of years, but one of the first stories I read was called "When the Devil Was Sick," and it was sure a good story.

I like all the stories from start to finish, but Fred MacIsaac is my favorite author.

Any one wanting back issues of ARGOSY can write to me, making offer, and I will see that they receive the books. Have 1928 books from January to November. 1927 from March to July, also November to December. 1929 from April to December, and all 1930 up until present time.

Long life to the ARGOSY and may the stories continue as good in future as they have in the past.

MRS. FRED WILBUR.

Chicago, Ill.

I see in recent issues of the ARGOSY that some readers wish back numbers of the *Argosy-Allstory*. I wish that you would give my name to those who want these out of print magazines. I have most of the issues from 1919 to 1926 and desire to sell them.

R. B. MILLS,
3859 West End Ave.

Marion, Ill.

I have read the ARGOSY for two years and have missed but very few copies. The stories are better every issue. My favorite authors are Fred MacIsaac, Eustace L. Adams, J. Allan Dunn. Be sure and have some more desert stories by Erle Stanley Gardner.

I have twenty-one ARGOSIES from April to the last number out. Would like to exchange them with some one for other magazines. Would prefer Northwest stories. My books are all in good condition.

HOWARD MOTSINGER.
Route 3.

Los Angeles, Cal.

Will you print a brief notice in "Argonotes" for the following *Allstory* magazines?

December, 1909. January, April and May, 1910. March 7 to 21 and April 11 to 25, 1914.

I will pay fifty cents a copy for the December, 1909, January, April and May, 1910. Two dollars a copy for the others.

CHARLES SHEPHERD.
908 W. 57th St.

Charleston, S. C.

I have at this time a large supply of back numbers of the *Argosy-Allstory Weekly* which I am anxious to dispose of.

Will you kindly put my name in your files in case some one should inquire for back numbers? I will be glad to supply the dates of these magazines.

H. L. GADSDEN,
Medical College of the State of South Carolina.

WESTERN story fans are these readers:

Adrian, Mich.

I have enjoyed your stories very much and especially the stories about out West. I have enjoyed "The Crimson Trail," "In the Reign of King Ben," "The Trail of Deceit" and others. I would consider it a great favor if you would publish more of similar stories. I have been reading the ARGOSY for a long time and consider it a very interesting magazine.

DONNA MILEY.

Duluth, Minn.

The ARGOSY has had some good stories lately. Some of the best being "The Trail of Deceit," "The Ghost of Locked Inlet," "Moving Day," "The Crimson Trail" and "Forbidden Seas."

Would like to read a good Western story by W. C. Tuttle or J. E. Grinstead again soon.

MILTON LOFALD.

"THE world-wide magazine," these two Oregon girls call ARGOSY:

Portland, Ore.

We, two of the millions of ARGOSY fans, want to express our appreciation of the efforts put forth to make ARGOSY the world-wide magazine. And it is world-wide, too, in every way.

In this little corner of the world one can see, on every Wednesday afternoon, two hard-work-

ing (?) specimens of the weaker sex perched on opposite corners of the davenport "glomming" the stories of the ARGOSY. Then we argue and discuss them. The brunette partner likes impossible stories, and the blonde likes mysteries, but we do agree that of them all the MacIsaac stories head the long list of favorites. We have just finished "The Legacy of Peril" and "Gambler's Throw" and starting "The Snake Mother." The brunette is all enthused, but the blonde isn't sure yet.

We got a big kick out of "The Goldfish Mutiny" and— Well, why go on, we like 'em all, but have our preferences. We say, "Don't change the ARGOSY," and that includes the interesting little articles that follow the stories. And as for the cover artists, they certainly can illustrate "mind pictures." We do get a shock once in a while, though, from the photographs of authors. Especially the aforementioned MacIsaac. We thought he was a great big burly dark-visaged brute—bue he looks rather like a college professor. But we are never going to break up the ARGOSY duet as long as it remains as interesting as it now is. This is just a little appreciation from the

BLONDE AND BRUNETTE.

"PHONY!" cries this reader, and gives his vigorous opinion of two types of stories:

Springfield, Mo.

Did it ever occur to you that impossible stories and racketeer novels seem to run hand in hand? Did it ever occur to you that these same two joy killers are the most disliked by the common public?

Every time I see one of these "phonys" coming I start rummaging around for an eligible substitute.

The things that most of our gang, the ARGOSY gang, are yelling for can be found in China, South Seas, Canada, Alaska or Japan. You don't have to go all the way to Mars, and then only reel in a fantastic bedtime story, to get material for our mag. Don't mar the book by printing a lot of bunk, detested by the majority. Please—I'm beggin' ya.

JOE BEN TACK.

CRIME stories don't please this reader, either:

Canonsburg, Pa.

Every one seems to start their letter by saying how long they have read the ARGOSY, so I will do the same.

I have been reading the ARGOSY for about three years, and it has pleased me. "The Crimson Trail" and "In the Reign of King Ben" are excellent Western stories.

I am disgusted with your crime stories, but I suppose others like them. So why kick? I just pass them up.

I hope you will print more history stories.

I enjoy Erle Stanley Gardner's "Whispering Tales."

My favorite authors' list is headed by MacIsaac; second, W. Wirt, and third is Gardner. Of course the other writers are very good, too.

Hoping to have more history stories.

ELIZABETH HORNYAK.

BUT—"only keeping up with the times," is this reader's argument for racketeer stories:

Puxico, Mo.

I have been reading some of the letters in ARGOSY written to you about too many crime and racketeer stories. Of course you can't please every one, but I think you are only keeping up with the times and I hope you keep the good work up. I like that kind of stories and let those fellows that want those Spanish War stories go to the library and get them. Take the moving picture houses, for instance; why, their biggest drawing card is crime pictures. People don't go for war stuff any more. So give me lots of hot crime and racketeer stories and I will wish more power to you.

"Dead-Line," "Gambler's Throw" and "The Legacy of Peril" all were wonderful stories.

Hoping you continue to give as good stories as you have,

A CONTENTED READER,

H. E. S.

HOW can we publish so good a magazine for ten cents? That's what puzzles this reader:

Nashua, N. H.

I can't quite understand how you can afford to put out a magazine of ARGOSY's caliber for the insignificant sum of ten cents. It's amazing. Your authors are all very good, though some of them do stand out above the others.

My favorite authors are as follows: MacIsaac, Wirt, Gardner and Merritt.

I first became acquainted with Mr. Gardner's stories in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY. This publication carries his *Lester Leith* series. But your "Whispering Tales" are fully as good.

"The Snake Mother" has certainly started off good. I think that I can rate it as almost as good as "The Princess of the Atom." I think "The Princess of the Atom" was the best story I've ever read, so that means "The Snake Mother" is good. Others may disagree with me.

I also liked "Spawn of the Comet," "Jungle Justice," "The Nine Red Gods Decide," "Alexander the Red," "Dead-Line" and "Gambler's Throw."

Referring to the little articles at the bottom of the page, keep these in by all means. Did you know that Nashua has a bridge which holds several records? It is almost as wide as it is long. Took three separate construction companies to build it and required two years of uninterrupted work to complete. It is the widest bridge for its length in the world. Keene, N. H., has the widest paved unbroken street in the world.

JOHN C. BARRY.

"ONE of the family"—that's ARGOSY, in this Massachusetts home:

Quincy, Mass.

The ARGOSY has been "one of the family" for ten years. This is the first time I have written in defense of any story. Please do not discontinue the crime or racketeer stories. It isn't "rot" or "rubbish," as some of your readers will have you believe. It is the common, every-day headlines. I don't dash the ARGOSY into the waste paper basket when you print fantastic stories from Mars. I just reason that there may be people who enjoy them. We all enjoy the Legion stories. You have a splendid staff of writers, but please don't inflict any archery stories on us.

May the ARGOSY continue to be the leading magazine of the nation.

MRS. J. STEVENS AND FAMILY.

JUST as we were developing a slightly swelled head, along came this red-hot denunciation and brought us back to normal:

Seattle, Wash.

As an ARGOSY reader of long standing I want to voice a protest. Your stories are getting worse all the time. Take this "The Snake Mother" that you raved about. I like scientific stories, but that isn't a scientific story. It is a weird story that belongs in a magazine read by people who like human-headed snakes and spider men and that sort of thing. There is no science in it. It is disgusting to any person of decency. Give us science stories, lots of 'em, but why not science stories about real human beings and scientific devices, instead of about ghastly monsters and no science?

Another one was that "Miss Percy" in the November 8 issue. Just when the hero gets canned from the Navy along comes a revolution

or something, just at the right time. He goes out to do battle. Then the natives pick out his particular truck to attack. And about the time things are getting hot, with the hero throwing himself on the fire to put it out and the natives closing in, along comes the Navy or the Marines or somebody just in the nick of time to save our dear hero. Rot! Do you expect us to pay money to read that stuff?

"Cubes of Chance" was just fair, after the author rambled around about New York and way points and finally got something to happening. I still don't see what the story was all about. What if he hadn't happened along at just the right time on the right street under the right window to find those dice?

"The Luck of Nagore" was fairly good. But if you can't get any better stories than you have been publishing lately you can print one less copy. It's just the same old thing in the same old way every week. Why not put your authors on a milk diet and see if you can't stir up something worth while?

Disgustedly yours,

ORT P. DIXON.

NOW for a few favorite stories:

St. Louis, Mo.

The stories that I enjoyed in your splendid magazine were "The Prince of Peril," "The Crimson Trail," "Jungle Justice," "The Legacy of Peril," "Gambler's Throw," "The Beast Plants," "Good-Advice McGonigle," "Spawn of the Comet," "On the Wing," "Blood-Red Gold," "The Sapphire House," "Along the Trail," and "Pegleg Baron in Hollywood."

The stories that I did not enjoy were "Dead-Line," "The Red Germ of Courage," "The Renegade Caid," "Ocean Outlaws," "The Emergency Mate," "The Sea Pig," and "The Nine Red Gods Decide."

My favorite authors are Fred MacIsaac, Otis Adelbert Kline, George F. Worts, J. E. Grinstead, A. Merritt, Erle Stanley Gardner, and Theodore Roscoe.

I do not like J. Allan Dunn, Eugene Cunningham or Ralph R. Perry.

Here's hoping that you don't have so many sea stories.

HARRY HILL.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

I've just taken a peek at "Looking Ahead" and found W. Wirt, J. Allan Dunn, and Anthony M. Rud. Just looking at their names, I know I have a treat in store for me. Can I wait? I should say not! But before I go any further I would like to make a suggestion. Try to have A. Merritt, Fred MacIsaac, Erle Stanley Gardner,

Ralph R. Perry, W. Wirt, J. Allan Dunn, Anthony M. Rud, Otis Adelbert Kline and Theodore Roscoe in one issue, and that issue would be the greatest in the world. Not exaggerating, either.

In this October 25 issue the following stories were great. They rank: one is best, two is next, three is good, and four is pretty good.

They are as follows: "Written in Sand," by Erle Stanley Gardner; "The Snake Mother," by A. Merritt; "Jungle Justice," by George F. Worts, and "Man's Way," by Ralph R. Perry.

Every time I see Gardner's name in an issue, I jump with joy and anticipation. When I read one of his stories I think that I am a witness or a participant in the action. All in all, he is my idea of a great author. I can't express how I feel toward him and his stories.

PHILIP PRESSEISEN.

Los Angeles, Cal.

In looking over your choice coupons for the past two and a half months, in my opinion "The Man of Gold," by Fred MacIsaac, was the best serial, followed closely by "The Prince of Peril," by Kline.

The best novelette was "The Renegade Caid," by Mason. Then Perkins's story, "On the Wing."

The two best short stories were "The Red Germ of Courage," and "Written in Sand," by Gardner.

KENNY MOORE.

YOUR CHOICE COUPON

Editor, ARGOSY,

280 Broadway, N. Y. C., N. Y.

The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____

12-20



Looking Ahead!

Fred MacIsaac

chooses South America for the scene of his latest novel. Far up into the inaccessible jungles of the Amazon he takes us on a thrilling and dramatic search for that new liquid gold—

BALATA

Hulbert Footner

will be on hand again with *Madame Storey*. When murder and spiritualism are scrambled the great detective is confronted with a case worthy of her talents. A tense complete novelette—

THE DEATH NOTICE

COMING TO YOU IN THE ARGOSY OF DECEMBER 27th

television—the coming field of many great opportunities—is covered by my course.

The One Sure Way to BIG PAY in RADIO

Talking pictures—*an invention made possible only by radio—offers many jobs to well-trained Radio men.*

YOU MUST HAVE NRI TRAINING to be a CERTIFIED RADIO-TRICIAN

My course is the **ONLY** one that makes you a "Certified RADIO-TRICIAN." The U. S. Government grants me *exclusive* right to give that distinctive title to all who complete my training. It will mean valuable recognition to you in whatever branch of Radio you follow and will help open the door to bigger pay. Even before you graduate I give you business cards and a "JUNIOR RADIO-TRICIAN" card, which many of my students find helpful in earning money in spare time. My course has helped hundreds of men. It will help you. Send for my free book and you'll see why.

Seldom Under \$100 a Week



"Dear Mr. Smith: For the month of November I made \$577 and for December over \$645, and January, \$465. My earnings seldom fall under \$100 a week. I'll say the N. R. I. (National

Radio Institute) course is thorough and complete."—letter from graduate, E. E. Winborne, 1414 W. 48th Street, Norfolk, Va.

Unlimited Consultation Service

You can keep yourself posted on new developments without extra cost. Radio's change and growth bring new opportunities for the man who understands them. You'll have our whole Staff at your service to keep you informed.



Broadcasting stations offer fascinating jobs, paying from \$1800 to \$5000 a year.

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Send for my Free Book See how Quickly I Train You at Home to Fill a Big-Pay Radio Job



In Radio more than in any other field, the surest, quickest way to get ahead is through *training!* For Radio is in crying need of more well-trained men. Competition is keen among the untrained fellows but the way is wide open for men who *know* Radio! Moreover, there are plenty of opportunities to earn while you learn—many of my students make \$200 to \$1000 in their spare time while learning. That is why I urge you to mail the coupon below for my free book. It tells about the great money-making opportunities that Radio offers trained men—and how you can learn at home to become a Radio Expert.

Many Earn \$50 to \$100 a Week

Many of my graduates are earning \$50 to \$100 a week. After completing my training you, too, should earn as good or even better pay. Hundreds of fine jobs are opening every year. Broadcasting Stations pay \$1,800 to \$5,000 a year to Radio engineers, operators, and station managers. Radio manufacturers continually need testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, service men, buyers, for jobs paying up to \$15,000 a year. Shipping companies use hundreds of operators, giving them good pay plus expenses. Radio dealers and jobbers pay \$30 to \$100 a week to trained service men, salesmen, buyers, managers. Talking Movies pay as much as \$75 to \$200 a week to men with Radio training. Another way to make big money is to open a spare time or full time Radio sales and service business of your own. And any day now Television may open the way to a new world of opportunities to men who *know* Radio.

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Send for my 64-page book of facts on the many opportunities for trained men in Radio today. It has put hundreds of fellows on the road to bigger pay and success. I back my course with a signed agreement to refund every penny of your money if, after completion, you are not satisfied with the Lessons and Instruction Service I give you. **Fill in and mail the coupon NOW!**

Radio factories employ thousands. Salaries for well-trained men range from \$1800 to \$5000 a year.

Spare-time servicing is paying N. R. I. men \$200 to \$1000 a year.

J.E. Smith, Pres., NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE Dept. ONK WASHINGTON D.C.

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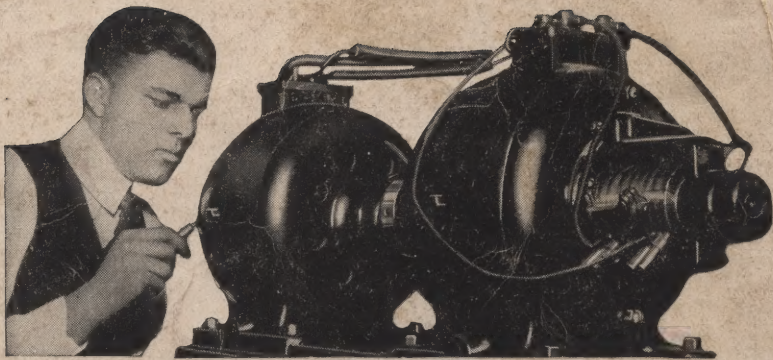
J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. ONK
Washington, D. C.

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Lack of experience—age, or advanced education bars no one. I don't care if you don't know an armature from an air brake—I don't expect you to! I don't care if you're 16 years old or 48—it makes no difference! Don't let lack of money stop you. Most of the men at Coyne have no more money than you have.

EARN WHILE YOU LEARN

If you should need part-time work while at school to help pay expenses, I'll assist you to it. Then, in 12 brief weeks, in the great roaring shops of Coyne, I train you as you never dreamed you could be trained . . . on a gigantic outlay of electrical apparatus . . . costing hundreds of thousands of dollars . . . real dynamos, engines, power plants, autos, switchboards, transmitting stations . . . everything from doorbells to farm power and lighting . . . full-sized . . . in full operation every day!

NO BOOKS

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No books, no baffling charts . . . all real actual work. . . right here in the great Coyne school . . . building real batteries . . . winding real armatures, operating real motors, dynamos and generators, wiring houses



Prepare for Jobs Like These

Here are a few of hundreds of positions open to Coyne-trained men. Our free employment bureau gives you lifetime employment service.

Substation Operator	\$60 a Week and up
Auto Electrician	\$110 a Week
Inventor	Unlimited
Maintenance Engineer	up to \$150 a Week
Service Station Owner	up to \$200 a Week
Radio Expert	up to \$100 a Week

etc., etc. That's a glimpse of how we make you a master practical electrician in 90 days, teaching you far more than the average ordinary electrician ever knows and fitting you to step in to jobs leading to big pay immediately after graduation. Here, in this world-famous Parent school—and nowhere else in the world—can you get this training!

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Coyne is your one great chance to get into electricity. Every obstacle is removed. This school is 30 years old—Coyne training is tested—proven beyond all doubt—endorsed by many large electrical concerns. You can find out everything absolutely free. Simply mail the coupon and let me send you the big, free Coyne book of 150 photographs . . . facts . . . jobs . . . salaries . . . opportunities. Tells you how many earn expenses while training and how we assist our graduates in the field. This does not obligate you. So act at once. Just mail coupon.

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